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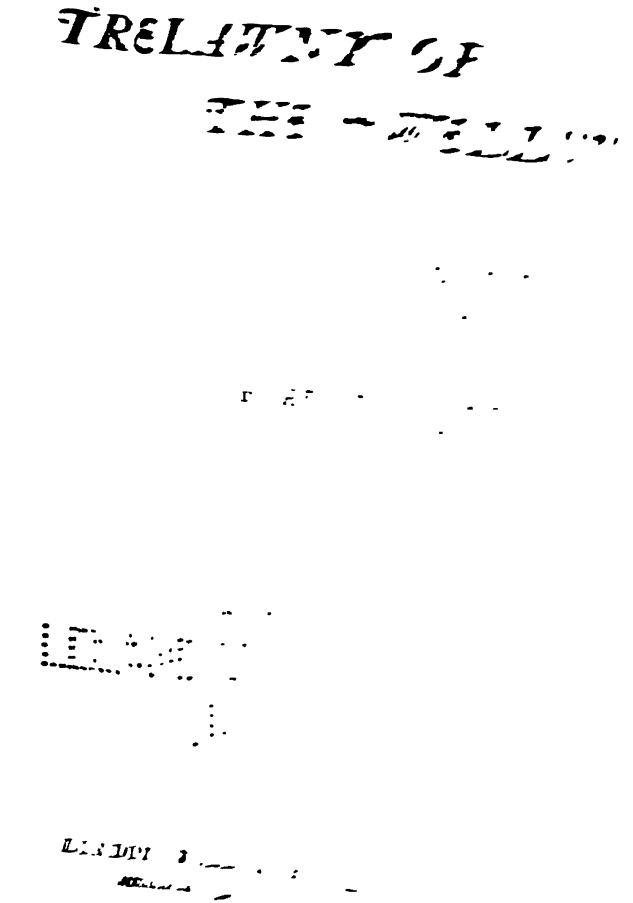

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THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY.

Theatrical Folk.

JAMES TELFER . . . . .
MRS. TELFER (MISS VIOLET SYLVESTER) . . . . .
AUGUSTUS COLPOYS . . .
FERDINAND GADD . . . .
TOM WRENCH . . . . .
AVONIA BUNN . . . . .
ROSE TRELAWNY . . . .
} *(of the Bagnigge-Wells Theatre.*

IMOGEN PARROTT (*of the Royal Olympic Theatre*).
O'DWYER (*Prompter at the Pantheon Theatre*).
MEMBERS OF THE COMPANY OF THE PANTHEON THEATRE.
HALL-KEEPER AT THE PANTHEON.

Non-theatrical Folk.

VICE-CHANCELLOR SIR WILLIAM GOWER, KNT.
MISS TRAFALGAR GOWER (*Sir William's sister*).
ARTHUR GOWER
CLARA DE FŒNIX } (*his grand-children*).
CAPTAIN DE FŒNIX (*Clara's husband*).
MRS. MOSSOP.
MR. ABLETT.
CHARLES.
SARAH.

THE FIRST ACT.

MR. AND MRS. TELFER'S LODGINGS AT NO. 2, BRYDON CRESCENT, CLERKENWELL. MAY.

THE SECOND ACT.

AT SIR WILLIAM GOWER'S, IN CAVENDISH SQUARE. JUNE.

THE THIRD ACT.

AGAIN IN BRYDON CRESCENT. DECEMBER.

THE FOURTH ACT.

ON THE STAGE OF THE PANTHEON THEATRE. A FEW DAYS LATER.

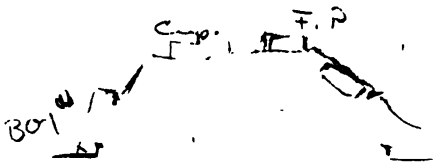
Period—somewhere in the early Sixties.

Note.—BAGNIGGE (locally pronounced, Bagnidge) WELLS—formerly a popular mineral spring in Islington, London, situated not far from the better remembered Sadler's-Wells. The gardens of Bagnigge-Wells were at one time much resorted to; but, as a matter of fact, Bagnigge-Wells, unlike Sadler's-Wells, has never possessed a playhouse. Sadler's-Wells Theatre, however—always familiarly known as the "Wells",—still exists. It was rebuilt in 1876-77.

A DIRECTION TO THE STAGE MANAGER.

THE costumes and scenic decoration of this little play should follow, to the closest detail, the mode of the early Sixties—the period, in dress, of crinoline and the peg-top trouser; in furniture, of horsehair and mahogany, and the abominable "walnut-and-rep." No attempt should be made to modify such fashions in illustration, to render them less strange, even less grotesque, to the modern eye. On the contrary, there should be an endeavour to reproduce, perhaps to accentuate, any feature which may now seem particularly quaint and bizarre. Thus, lovely youth should be shown decked uncompromisingly as it was at the time indicated, at the risk (which the author believes to be a slight one) of pointing the chastening moral that, while beauty fades assuredly in its own time, it may appear to succeeding generations not to have been beauty at all.

This play was produced in London, at the Court Theatre, on Thursday, January 20th, and in New York, at the Lyceum Theatre, on Tuesday, November 22nd, 1898



TRELAWNY OF THE "WELLS."

THE FIRST ACT.

The scene represents a sitting room on the first floor of a respectable lodging house. On the right are two sash-windows, having Venetian blinds and giving a view of houses on the other side of the street. The grate of the fireplace is hidden by an ornament composed of shavings and paper roses. Over the fireplace is a mirror: on each side there is a sideboard-cupboard. On the left is a door, and a landing is seen outside. Between the windows stand a cottage piano and a piano stool. Above the sofa, on the left, stands a large black trunk, the lid bulging with its contents and displaying some soiled theatrical finery. On the front of the trunk, in faded lettering, appear the words "Miss Violet Sylvester, Theatre Royal, Drury Lane." Under the sofa there are two or three pairs of ladies' satin shoes, much the worse for wear, and on the sofa a white-satin bodice, yellow with age, a heap of dog-eared playbooks, and some other litter of a like character. On the top of the

piano there is a wig-block, with a man's wig upon it, and in the corners of the room there stand some walking sticks and a few theatrical swords. In the centre of the stage is a large circular table. There is a clean cover upon it, and on the top of the sideboard-cupboards are knives and forks, plate, glass, cruet-stands, and some gaudy flowers in vases—all suggesting preparations for festivity. The woodwork of the room is grained, the ceiling plainly white-washed, and the wall paper is of a neutral tint and much faded. The pictures are engravings in maple frames, and a portrait or two, in oil, framed in gilt. The furniture, curtains, and carpet are worn, but everything is clean and well-kept.

The light is that of afternoon in early summer.

MRS. MOSSOP—*a portly, middle-aged Jewish lady, elaborately attired—is laying the tablecloth.* ABLETT *enters hastily, divesting himself of his coat as he does so. He is dressed in rusty black for "waiting."*

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*In a fluster.*] Oh, here you are, Mr. Ablett——!

ABLETT.

Good-day, Mrs. Mossop.

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Bringing the cruet-stands.*] I declare I thought you'd forgotten me.

ABLETT.

[*Hanging his coat upon a curtain-knob, and turning up his shirt sleeves.*] I'd begun to fear I should never escape from the shop, ma'am. Jest as I was preparin' to clean myself, the 'ole universe seemed to cry aloud for pertaters. [*Relieving* MRS. MOSSOP *of the cruet-stands, and satisfying himself as to the contents of the various bottles.*] Now you take a seat, Mrs. Mossop. You 'ave but to say "Mr. Ablett, lay for so many," and the exact number shall be laid for.

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Sinking into the armchair.*] I hope the affliction of short breath may be spared you, Ablett. Ten is the number.

ABLETT.

[*Whipping up the mustard energetically.*] Short-breathed you may be, ma'am, but not short-sighted. That gal of yours is no ordinary gal, but to 'ave set 'er to wait on ten persons would 'ave been to 'ave caught disaster. [*Bringing knives and forks, glass, etc., and glancing round the room as he does so.*] I am in Mr. and Mrs. Telfer's setting-room, I believe, ma'am?

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Surveying the apartment complacently.*] And what a handsomely proportioned room it is, to be sure!

ABLETT.

May I h'ask if I am to 'ave the honour of includin' my triflin' fee for this job in their weekly book?

MRS. MOSSOP.

No, Ablett—a separate bill, please. The Telfers kindly give the use of their apartment, to save the cost of holding the ceremony at the "Clown" Tavern; but share and share alike over the expenses is to be the order of the day.

ABLETT.

I thank you, ma'am. [*Rubbing up the knives with a napkin.*] You let fall the word "ceremony," ma'am——

MRS. MOSSOP.

Ah, Ablett, and a sad one—a farewell cold collation to Miss Trelawny.

ABLETT.

Lor' bless me! I 'eard a rumour——

MRS. MOSSOP.

A true rumour. She's taking her leave of us, the dear.

ABLETT.

This will be a blow to the "Wells," ma'am.

MRS. MOSSOP.

The best juvenile lady the "Wells" has known since Mr. Phillips's management.

ABLETT.

Report 'as it, a love affair, ma'am.

MRS. MOSSOP.

A love affair, indeed. And a poem into the bargain, Ablett, if poet was at hand to write it.

ABLETT.

Reelly, Mrs. Mossop! [*Polishing a tumbler.*] Is the beer to be bottled or draught, ma'am, on this occasion?

MRS. MOSSOP.

Draught for Miss Trelawny, invariably.

ABLETT.

Then draught it must be all round, out of compliment. Jest fancy! nevermore to 'ear customers speak of Trelawny of the "Wells," except as a pleasin' memory! A non-professional gentleman they give out, ma'am.

MRS. MOSSOP.

Yes.

ABLETT.

Name of Glover.

MRS. MOSSOP.

Gower. Grandson of Vice-Chancellor Sir William Gower, Mr. Ablett.

ABLETT.

You don't say, ma'am!

MRS. MOSSOP.

No father nor mother, and lives in Cavendish Square with the old judge and a great aunt.

ABLETT.

Then Miss Trelawny quits the Profession, ma'am, for good and all, I presoom?

MRS. MOSSOP.

Yes, Ablett, she's at the theaytre at this moment, distributing some of her little ornaments and fallals among the ballet. She played last night for the last time—the last time on any stage. [*Rising and going to the sideboard-cupboard.*] And without so much as a line in the bill to announce it. What a benefit she might have taken!

ABLETT.

I know one who was good for two box tickets, Mrs. Mossop.

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Bringing the flowers to the table and arranging them, while* ABLETT *sets out the knives and forks.*] But no. "No fuss," said the Gower family, "no publicity. Withdraw quietly—" that was the Gower family's injunctions—"withdraw quietly, and have done with it."

ABLETT.

And when is the weddin' to be, ma'am?

MRS. MOSSOP.

It's not yet decided, Mr. Ablett. In point of fact, before the Gower family positively say Yes to the union, Miss Trelawny is to make her home in Cavendish Square for a short term—"short term" is the Gower family's own expression—in order to habituate herself to the West End. They're sending their carriage for her at two o'clock this afternoon, Mr. Ablett—their carriage and pair of bay horses.

ABLETT.

Well, I dessay a West End life has sooperior advantages over the Profession in some respecks, Mrs. Mossop.

MRS. MOSSOP.

When accompanied by wealth, Mr. Ablett. Here's Miss Trelawny but nineteen, and in a month-or-two's time she'll be ordering about her own powdered foot-

man, and playing on her grand piano. How many actresses do *that*, I should like to know!

[TOM WRENCH'S *voice is heard.*

TOM.

[*Outside the door.*] Rebecca! Rebecca, my loved one!

MRS. MOSSOP.

Oh, go along with you, Mr. Wrench!

[TOM *enters, with a pair of scissors in his hand. He is a shabbily-dressed, ungraceful man of about thirty, with a clean-shaven face, curly hair, and eyes full of good-humour.*

TOM.

My own, especial Rebecca!

MRS. MOSSOP.

Don't be a fool, Mr. Wrench! Now, I've no time to waste. I know you want something——

TOM.

Everything, adorable. But most desperately do I stand in need of a little skilful trimming at your fair hands.

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Taking the scissors from him and clipping the frayed edges of his shirt-cuffs and collar.*] First it's

patching a coat, and then it's binding an Inverness! Sometimes I wish that top room of mine was empty.

TOM.

And sometimes I wish my heart was empty, cruel Rebecca.

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Giving him a thump.*] Now, I really will tell Mossop of you, when he comes home! I've often threatened it——

TOM.

[*To* ABLETT.] Whom do I see! No—it can't be—but yes—I believe I have the privilege of addressing Mr. Ablett, the eminent greengrocer, of Rosoman Street?

ABLETT.

[*Sullily.*] Well, Mr. Wrench, and wot of it?

TOM.

You possess a cart, good Ablett, which may be hired by persons of character and responsibility. "By the hour or job"—so runs the legend. I will charter it, one of these Sundays, for a drive to Epping.

ABLETT.

I dunno so much about that, Mr. Wrench.

TOM.

Look to the springs, good Ablett, for this comely lady will be my companion.

MRS. MOSSOP.

Dooce take your impudence! Give me your other hand. Haven't you been to rehearsal this morning with the rest of 'em?

TOM.

I have, and have left my companions still toiling. My share in the interpretation of Sheridan Knowles's immortal work did not necessitate my remaining after the first act.

MRS. MOSSOP.

Another poor part, I suppose, Mr. Wrench?

TOM.

Another, and to-morrow yet another, and on Saturday two others—all equally, damnably rotten.

MRS. MOSSOP.

Ah, well, well! *somebody* must play the bad parts in this world, on and off the stage. There, [*returning the scissors*] there's no more edge left to fray; we've come to the soft. [*He points the scissors at his breast.*] Ah! don't do that!

TOM.

You are right, sweet Mossop, I won't perish on an empty stomach. [*Taking her aside.*] But tell me, shall I disgrace the feast, eh? Is my appearance too scandalously seedy?

MRS. MOSSOP.

Not *it*, my dear.

TOM.

Miss Trelawny—do you think she'll regard me as a blot on the banquet? [*wistfully*] do you, Beccy?

MRS. MOSSOP.

She! la! don't distress yourself. She'll be too excited to notice *you*.

TOM.

H'm, yes! now I recollect, she has always been that. Thanks, Beccy.

[*A knock, at the front-door, is heard.* MRS. MOSSOP *hurries to the window down the stage.*

MRS. MOSSOP.

Who's that? [*Opening the window and looking out.*] It's Miss Parrott! Miss Parrott's arrived!

TOM.

Jenny Parrott? Has Jenny condescended——?

MRS. MOSSOP.

Jenny! Where are your manners, Mr. Wrench?

TOM.

[*Grandiloquently.*] Miss Imogen Parrott, of the Olympic Theatre.

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*At the door, to* ABLETT.] Put your coat on, Ablett. We are not selling cabbages. [*She disappears and is heard speaking in the distance.*] Step up, Miss Parrott! Tell Miss Parrott to mind that mat, Sarah——!

TOM.

Be quick, Ablett, be quick! The *élite* is below! More dispatch, good Ablett!

ABLETT.

[*To* TOM, *spitefully, while struggling into his coat.*] Miss Trelawny's leavin' will make all the difference to the old "Wells." The season 'll terminate abrupt, and then the comp'ny 'll be h'out, Mr. Wrench—h'out, sir!

TOM.

[*Adjusting his necktie, at a mirror over the piano.*] Which will lighten the demand for the spongy turnip and the watery marrow, my poor Ablett.

ABLETT.

[*Under his breath.*] Presumpshus! [*He produces a pair of white cotton gloves, and having put one on makes a horrifying discovery.*] Two lefts! That's Mrs. Ablett all over!

[*During the rest of the act, he is continually in difficulties, through his efforts to wear*

one of the gloves upon his right hand. MRS. MOSSOP *now re-enters, with* IMOGEN PARROTT. IMOGEN *is a pretty, light-hearted young woman, of about seven-and-twenty, daintily dressed.*

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*To* IMOGEN.] There, it might be only yesterday you lodged in my house, to see you gliding up those stairs! And this the very room you shared with poor Miss Brooker!

IMOGEN.

[*Advancing to* TOM.] Well, Wrench, and how are you?

TOM.

[*Bringing her a chair, demonstratively dusting the seat of it with his pocket-handkerchief*]. Thank you, much the same as when you used to call me Tom.

IMOGEN.

Oh, but I have turned over a new leaf, you know, since I have been at the Olympic.

MRS. MOSSOP.

I am sure my chairs don't require dusting, Mr. Wrench.

TOM.

[*Placing the chair below the table, and blowing his nose with his handkerchief, with a flourish.*] My way of showing homage, Mossop.

MRS. MOSSOP.

Miss Parrott has sat on them often enough, when she was an honoured member of the "Wells"—haven't you, Miss Parrott?

IMOGEN.

[*Sitting, with playful dignity.*] I suppose I must have done so. Don't remind me of it. I sit on nothing nowadays but down pillows covered with cloth of gold.

[MRS. MOSSOP *and* ABLETT *prepare to withdraw.*

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*At the door, to* IMOGEN.] Ha, ha! ha! I could fancy I'm looking at Undine again—Undine, the Spirit of the Waters. She's not the least changed since she appeared as Undine—is she, Mr. Ablett?

ABLETT.

[*Joining* MRS. MOSSOP.] No—or as Prince Cammyralzyman in the pantomine. *I* never 'ope to see a pair o' prettier limbs——

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Sharply.*] Now then!

[*She pushes him out; they disappear.*

IMOGEN.

[*After a shiver at* ABLETT'S *remark.*] In my present exalted station I don't hear much of what

goes on at the "Wells," Wrench. Are your abilities still—still——?

TOM.

Still unrecognized, still confined within the almost boundless and yet repressive limits of Utility—General Utility? [*Nodding.*] H'm, still.

IMOGEN.

Dear me! a thousand pities! I positively mean it.

TOM.

Thanks.

IMOGEN.

What do you think! You were mixed up in a funny dream I dreamt one night lately.

TOM.

[*Bowing.*] Highly complimented.

IMOGEN.

It was after a supper which rather—well, I'd had some strawberries sent me from Hertfordshire.

TOM.

Indigestion levels all ranks.

IMOGEN.

It was a nightmare. I found myself on the stage of the Olympic in that wig you—oh, gracious! You used to play your very serious little parts in it——

TOM.

The wig with the ringlets?

IMOGEN.

Ugh! yes.

TOM.

I wear it to-night, for the second time this week, in a part which is very serious—and very little.

IMOGEN.

Heavens! it *is* in existence then!

TOM.

And long will be, I hope. I've only three wigs, and this one accommodates itself to so many periods.

IMOGEN.

Oh, how it used to amuse the gallery-boys!

TOM.

They still enjoy it. If you looked in this evening at half-past-seven—I'm done at a quarter-to-eight—if you looked in at half-past seven, you would hear the same glad, rapturous murmur in the gallery when the presence of that wig is discovered. Not that they fail to laugh at my other wigs, at every article of adornment I possess, in fact! Good God, Jenny——!

IMOGEN.

[*Wincing.*] Ssssh!

TOM.

Miss Parrott—if they gave up laughing at me now, I believe I—I believe I should—*miss it*. I believe I couldn't spout my few lines now in silence; my unaccompanied voice would sound so strange to me. Besides, I often think those gallery-boys are really fond of me, at heart. You can't laugh as they do—rock with laughter sometimes!—at what you dislike.

IMOGEN.

Of course not. *Of course* they like you, Wrench. You cheer them, make their lives happier——

TOM.

And to-night, by the bye, I also assume that beast of a felt hat—the gray hat with the broad brim, and the imitation wool feathers. You remember it?

IMOGEN.

Y-y-yes.

TOM.

I see you do. Well, that hat still persists in falling off, when I most wish it to stick on. It will tilt and tumble to-night—during one of Telfer's pet speeches; I feel it will.

IMOGEN.

Ha, ha, ha!

TOM.

And those yellow boots; I wear *them* to-night——

IMOGEN.

No!

TOM.

Yes!

IMOGEN.

Ho, ho, ho, ho!

TOM.

[*With forced hilarity.*] Ho, ho! ha, ha! And the spurs—the spurs that once tore your satin petticoat! You recollect——?

IMOGEN.

[*Her mirth suddenly checked.*] Recollect!

TOM.

You would see those spurs to-night, too, if you patronised us—*and* the red worsted tights. The worsted tights are a little thinner, a little more faded and discoloured, a little more darned—Oh, yes, thank you, I am still, as you put it, still—still—still——

[*He walks away, going to the mantelpiece and turning his back upon her.*

IMOGEN.

[*After a brief pause.*] I'm sure I didn't intend to hurt your feelings, Wrench.

TOM.

[*Turning, with some violence.*] You! you hurt my

feelings! Nobody can hurt my feelings! I have no feelings——!

[ABLETT *re-enters, carrying three chairs of odd patterns.* TOM *seizes the chairs and places them about the table, noisily.*

ABLETT.

Look here, Mr. Wrench! If I'm to be 'ampered in performin' my dooties——

TOM.

More chairs, Ablett! In my apartment, the chamber nearest heaven, you will find one with a loose leg. We will seat Mrs. Telfer upon that. She dislikes me, and she is, in every sense, a heavy woman.

ABLETT.

[*Moving toward the door—dropping his glove.*] My opinion, you are meanin' to 'arrass me, Mr. Wrench——

TOM.

[*Picking up the glove and throwing it to* ABLETT—*singing.*] "Take back thy glove, thou faithless fair!" Your glove, Ablett.

ABLETT.

Thank you, sir; it *is* my glove, and you are no gentleman. [*He withdraws.*

TOM.

True, Ablett—not even a Walking Gentleman.

IMOGEN.

Don't go on so, Wrench. What about your plays? Aren't you trying to write any plays just now?

TOM.

Trying! I am doing more than trying to write plays. I am writing plays. I have written plays.

IMOGEN.

Well?

TOM.

My cupboard upstairs is choked with 'em.

IMOGEN.

Won't anyone take a fancy——?

TOM.

Not a sufficiently violent fancy.

IMOGEN.

You know, the speeches were so short and had such ordinary words in them, in the plays you used to read to me—no big opportunity for the leading lady, Wrench.

TOM.

M' yes. I strive to make my people talk and behave like live people, don't I——?

IMOGEN.

[*Vaguely.*] I suppose you do.

TOM.

To fashion heroes out of actual, dull, every-day men—the sort of men you see smoking cheroots in the club windows in St. James's Street; and heroines from simple maidens in muslin frocks. Naturally, the managers won't stand that.

IMOGEN.

Why, of course not.

TOM.

If *they* did, the public wouldn't.

IMOGEN.

Is it likely?

TOM.

Is it likely? I wonder!

IMOGEN.

Wonder—what?

TOM.

Whether they would.

IMOGEN.

The public!

TOM.

The public. Jenny, I wonder about it sometimes so hard that that little bedroom of mine becomes a banqueting hall, and this lodging house a castle.

[*There is a loud and prolonged knocking at the front door.*

IMOGEN.

Here they are, I suppose.

TOM.

[*Pulling himself together.*] Good lord! have I become dishevelled?

IMOGEN.

Why, are you anxious to make an impression, even down to the last, Wrench?

TOM.

[*Angrily.*] Stop that!

IMOGEN.

It's no good your being sweet on her any longer, surely?

TOM.

[*Glaring at her.*] What cats you all are, you girls!

IMOGEN.

[*Holding up her hands.*] Oh! oh, dear! How vulgar—after the Olympic!

[ABLETT *returns, carrying three more chairs.*

ABLETT.

[*Arranging these chairs on the left of the table.*] They're all 'ome! they're all 'ome! [TOM *places the four chairs belonging to the room at the table. To* IMOGEN.] She looks 'eavenly, Miss Trelawny does. I

was jest takin' in the ale when she floated down the Crescent on her lover's arm. [*Wagging his head at* IMOGEN *admiringly.*] There, I don't know which of you two is the——

IMOGEN.

[*Haughtily.*] Man, keep your place!

ABLETT.

[*Hurt.*] H'as you please, miss—but you apperently forget I used to serve you with vegetables.

[*He takes up a position at the door as* TELFER *and* GADD *enter.* TELFER *is a thick-set, elderly man, with a worn, clean-shaven face, and iron-gray hair "clubbed" in the theatrical fashion of the time. Sonorous, if somewhat husky, in speech, and elaborately dignified in bearing, he is at the same time a little uncertain about his H's.* GADD *is a flashily-dressed young man of seven-and-twenty, with brown hair arranged à la Byron and moustache of a deeper tone.*

TELFER.

[*Advancing to* IMOGEN, *and kissing her paternally.*] Ha, my dear child! I heard you were 'ere. Kind of you to visit us. Welcome! I'll just put my 'at down——

[*He places his hat on the top of the piano, and proceeds to inspect the table.*

GADD.

[*Coming to* IMOGEN, *in an elegant, languishing way.*] Imogen, my darling. [*Kissing her.*] Kiss Ferdy!

IMOGEN.

Well, Gadd, how goes it—I mean how are you?

GADD.

[*Earnestly.*] I'm hitting them hard this season, my darling. To-night, Sir Thomas Clifford. They're simply waiting for my Clifford.

IMOGEN.

But who on earth is your Julia?

GADD.

Ha! Mrs. Telfer *goes on* for it—a venerable stop-gap. Absurd, of course; but we daren't keep my Clifford from them any longer.

IMOGEN.

You'll miss Rose Trelawny in business pretty badly, I expect, Gadd?

GADD.

[*With a shrug of the shoulders.*] She was to have done Rosalind for my benefit. Miss Fitzhugh joins on Monday; I must pull *her* through it somehow.

I would reconsider my bill, but they're waiting for my Orlando, waiting for it——

[COLPOYS *enters—an insignificant, wizen little fellow who is unable to forget that he is a low-comedian. He stands at the door squinting hideously at* IMOGEN *and indulging in extravagant gestures of endearment, while she continues her conversation with* GADD.

COLPOYS.

[*Failing to attract her attention.*] My love! my life!

IMOGEN.

[*Nodding to him indifferently.*] Good-afternoon, Augustus.

COLPOYS.

[*Ridiculously.*] She speaks! she hears me!

ABLETT.

[*Holding his glove before his mouth, convulsed with laughter.*] Ho, ho! oh, Mr. Colpoys! oh, reelly, sir! ho, dear!

GADD.

[*To* IMOGEN, *darkly.*] Colpoys is not nearly as funny as he was last year. Everybody's saying so. We want a low-comedian badly.

[*He retires, deposits his hat on the wig-block, and joins* TELFER *and* TOM.

COLPOYS.

[*Staggering to* IMOGEN *and throwing his arms about her neck.*] Ah—h—h! after all these years!

IMOGEN.

[*Pushing him away.*] Do be careful of my things, Colpoys!

ABLETT.

[*Going out, blind with mirth.*] Ha, ha, ha! ho, ho!

[*He collides with* MRS. TELFER, *who is entering at this moment.* MRS. TELFER *is a tall, massive lady of middle age—a faded queen of tragedy.*

ABLETT.

[*As he disappears.*] I'm sure I beg your pardon, Mrs. Telfer, ma'am.

MRS. TELFER.

Violent fellow! [*Advancing to* IMOGEN *and kissing her solemnly.*] How is it with you, Jenny Parrott?

IMOGEN.

Thank you, Mrs. Telfer, as well as can be. And you?

MRS. TELFER.

[*Waving away the inquiry.*] I am obliged to you for this response to my invitation. It struck me as

fitting that at such a time you should return for a brief hour or two to the company of your old associates—— [*Becoming conscious of* COLPOYS, *behind her, making grimaces at* IMOGEN.] Eh—h—h? [*Turning to* COLPOYS *and surprising him.*] Oh—h—h! Yes, Augustus Colpoys, you are extremely humorous *off*.

COLPOYS.

[*Stung.*] Miss Sylvester—Mrs. Telfer!

MRS. TELFER.

On the stage, sir, you are enough to make a cat weep.

COLPOYS.

Madam! from one artist to another! well, I—! 'pon my soul! [*Retreating and talking under his breath.*] Popular favourite! draw more money than all the—old guys——

MRS. TELFER.

[*Following him.*] What do you say, sir! Do you mutter!

[*They explain mutually.* AVONIA BUNN *enters—an untidy, tawdrily-dressed young woman of about three-and-twenty, with the airs of a suburban soubrette.*

AVONIA.

[*Embracing* IMOGEN.] Dear old girl!

IMOGEN.

Well, Avonia?

AVONIA.

This is jolly, seeing you again. My eye, what a rig-out! She'll be up directly. [*With a gulp.*] She's taking a last look-round at our room.

IMOGEN.

You've been crying, 'Vonia.

AVONIA.

No, I haven't. [*Breaking down.*] If I have I can't help it. Rose and I have chummed together—all this season—and part of last—and—it's a hateful profession! The moment you make a friend——! [*Looking toward the door.*] There! isn't she a dream? I dressed her——

[*She moves away, as* ROSE TRELAWNY *and* ARTHUR GOWER *enter.* ROSE *is nineteen, wears washed muslin, and looks divine. She has much of the extravagance of gesture, over-emphasis in speech, and freedom of manner engendered by the theatre, but is graceful and charming nevertheless.* ARTHUR *is a handsome, boyish young man—"all eyes" for* ROSE.

ROSE.

[*Meeting* IMOGEN.] Dear Imogen!

IMOGEN.

[*Kissing her.*] Rose, dear!

ROSE.

To think of your journeying from the West to see me make my exit from Brydon Crescent! But you're a good sort; you always were. Do sit down and tell me—oh—! let me introduce Mr. Gower. Mr. Arthur Gower—Miss Imogen Parrott. *The* Miss Parrott of the Olympic.

ARTHUR.

[*Reverentially.*] I know. I've seen Miss Parrott as Jupiter, and as—I forget the name—in the new comedy—— [IMOGEN *and* ROSE *sit, below the table.*

ROSE.

He forgets everything but the parts *I* play, and the pieces *I* play in—poor child! don't you, Arthur?

ARTHUR.

[*Standing by* ROSE, *looking down upon her.*] Yes—no. Well, of course I do! How can I help it, Miss Parrott? Miss Parrott won't think the worse of me for that—will you, Miss Parrott?

MRS. TELFER.

I am going to remove my bonnet. Imogen Parrott——?

IMOGEN.

Thank you, I'll keep my hat on, Mrs. Telfer—take care!

[MRS. TELFER, *in turning to go, encounters* ABLETT, *who is entering with two jugs of beer. Some of the beer is spilt.*

ABLETT.

I beg your pardon, ma'am.

MRS. TELFER.

[*Examining her skirts.*] Ruffian! [*She departs.*

ROSE.

[*To* ARTHUR.] Go and talk to the boys. I haven't seen Miss Parrott for ages.

[*In backing away from them,* ARTHUR *comes against* ABLETT.

ABLETT.

I beg your pardon, sir.

ARTHUR.

I beg yours.

ABLETT.

[*Grasping* ARTHUR'S *hand.*] Excuse the freedom, sir, if freedom you regard it as——

ARTHUR.

Eh——?

ABLETT.

You 'ave plucked the flower, sir; you 'ave stole our ch'icest blossom.

ARTHUR.

[*Trying to get away.*] Yes, yes, I know——

ABLETT.

Cherish it, Mr. Glover——!

ARTHUR.

I will, I will. Thank you——

[MRS. MOSSOP'S *voice is heard calling* "Ablett!" ABLETT *releases* ARTHUR *and goes out.* ARTHUR *joins* COLPOYS *and* TOM.

ROSE.

[To IMOGEN.] The carriage will be here in half an hour. I've so much to say to you. Imogen, the brilliant hits you've made! how lucky you have been!

IMOGEN.

My luck! what about *yours*?

ROSE.

Yes, isn't this a wonderful stroke of fortune for me! Fate, Jenny! that's what it is—Fate! Fate ordains that I shall be a well-to-do fashionable lady, instead of a popular but toiling actress. Mother often used to stare into my face, when I was little, and

whisper, "Rosie, I wonder what is to be your—fate." Poor mother! I hope she *sees*.

IMOGEN.

Your Arthur seems nice.

ROSE.

Oh, he's a dear. Very young, of course—not much more than a year older than me—than I. But he'll grow manly in time, and have moustaches, and whiskers out to here, he says.

IMOGEN.

How did you——?

ROSE.

He saw me act Blanche in *The Pedlar of Marseilles*, and fell in love.

IMOGEN.

Do you prefer Blanche——?

ROSE.

To Celestine? Oh, yes. You see, I got leave to introduce a song—where Blanche is waiting for Raphael on the bridge. [*Singing, dramatically but in low tones.*] "Ever of thee I'm fondly dreaming——"

IMOGEN.

I know—— [*They sing together.*

ROSE AND IMOGEN.

"Thy gentle voice my spirit can cheer."

ROSE.

It was singing that song that sealed my destiny, Arthur declares. At any rate, the next thing was he began sending bouquets and coming to the stage-door. Of course, I never spoke to him, never glanced at him. Poor mother brought me up in that way, not to speak to anybody, nor look.

IMOGEN.

Quite right.

ROSE.

I do hope she sees.

IMOGEN.

And then——?

ROSE.

Then Arthur managed to get acquainted with the Telfers, and Mrs. Telfer presented him to me. Mrs. Telfer has kept an eye on me all through. Not that it was necessary, brought up as I was—but she's a kind old soul.

IMOGEN.

And now you're going to live with his people for a time, aren't you?

ROSE.

Yes—on approval.

IMOGEN.

Ha, ha, ha! you don't mean that!

ROSE.

Well, in a way—just to reassure them, as they put it. The Gowers have such odd ideas about theatres, and actors and actresses.

IMOGEN.

Do you think you'll like the arrangement?

ROSE.

It 'll only be for a little while. I fancy they're prepared to take to me, especially Miss Trafalgar Gower——

IMOGEN.

Trafalgar!

ROSE.

Sir William's sister; she was born Trafalgar year, and christened after it——

[MRS. MOSSOP *and* ABLETT *enter, carrying trays on which are a pile of plates and various dishes of cold food—a joint, a chicken and a tongue, a ham, a pigeon pie, etc. They proceed to set out the dishes upon the table.*

IMOGEN.

[*Cheerfully.*] Well, God bless you, my dear. I'm

afraid *I* couldn't give up the stage though, not for all the Arthurs——

ROSE.

Ah, your mother wasn't an actress.

IMOGEN.

No.

ROSE.

Mine was, and I remember her saying to me once, "Rose, if ever you have the chance, get out of it."

IMOGEN.

The Profession?

ROSE.

Yes. "Get out of it;" mother said, "if ever a good man comes along, and offers to marry you and to take you off the stage, seize the chance—get out of it."

IMOGEN.

Your mother was never popular, was she?

ROSE.

Yes, indeed she was, most popular—till she grew oldish and lost her looks.

IMOGEN.

Oh, *that's* what she meant, then?

ROSE.

Yes, that's what she meant.

IMOGEN.

[*Shivering.*] Oh, lor', doesn't it make one feel depressed!

ROSE.

Poor mother! Well, I hope she sees.

MRS. MOSSOP.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, everything is prepared, and I do trust to your pleasure and satisfaction.

TELFER.

Ladies and gentlemen, I beg you to be seated, [*There is a general movement.*] Miss Trelawny will sit 'ere, on my right. On my left, my friend Mr. Gower will sit. Next to Miss Trelawny—who will sit beside Miss Trelawny?

GADD AND COLPOYS.

I will.

AVONIA.

No, do let me!

[GADD, COLPOYS, *and* AVONIA *gather round* ROSE *and wrangle for the vacant place.*

ROSE.

[*Standing by her chair.*] It must be a gentleman, 'Vonia. Now, if you two boys quarrel——!

GADD.

Please don't push me, Colpoys!

COLPOYS.

'Pon my soul, Gadd——!

ROSE.

I know how to settle it. Tom Wrench——!

TOM.

[*Coming to her.*] Yes?

[COLPOYS *and* GADD *move away, arguing.*

IMOGEN.

[*Seating herself.*] Mr. Gadd and Mr. Colpoys shall sit by me, one on each side.

[COLPOYS *sits on* IMOGEN'S *right*, GADD *on her left*, AVONIA *sits between* TOM *and* GADD; MRS. MOSSOP *on the right of* COLPOYS. *Amid much chatter, the viands are carved by* MRS. MOSSOP, TELFER, *and* TOM. *Some plates of chicken, etc., are handed round by* ABLETT, *while others are passed about by those at the table.*

GADD.

[*Quietly to* IMOGEN, *during a pause in the hubbub.*] Telfer takes the chair, you observe. Why *he* —more than myself, for instance?

IMOGEN.

[*To* GADD.] The Telfers have lent their room——

GADD.

Their stuffy room! that's no excuse. I repeat, Telfer has thrust himself into this position.

IMOGEN.

He's the oldest man present.

GADD.

True. And he begins to age in his acting too. His H's! scarce as pearls!

IMOGEN.

Yes, that's shocking. Now, at the Olympic, slip an H and you're damned for ever.

GADD.

And he's losing all his teeth. To act with him, it makes the house seem half empty.

[ABLETT *is now going about pouring out the ale. Occasionally he drops his glove, misses it, and recovers it.*

TELFER.

[*To Imogen.*] Miss Parrott, my dear, follow the counsel of one who has sat at many a "good man's feast"—have a little 'am.

IMOGEN.

Thanks, Mr. Telfer. [MRS. TELFER *returns.*

MRS. TELFER.

Sitting down to table in my absence! [*To* TELFER.] How is this, James?

TELFER.

We are pressed for time, Violet, my love.

ROSE.

Very sorry, Mrs. Telfer.

MRS. TELFER.

[*Taking her place, between* ARTHUR *and* MRS. MOSSOP—*gloomily.*] A strange proceeding.

ROSE.

Rehearsal was over so late. [*To* TELFER.] You didn't get to the last act till a quarter to one, did you?

AVONIA.

[*Taking off her hat and flinging it across the table to* COLPOYS.] Gus! catch! Put it on the sofa, there's a dear boy. [COLPOYS *perches the hat upon his head, and behaves in a ridiculous, mincing way.* ABLETT *is again convulsed with laughter. Some of the others are amused also, but more moderately.* Take that off, Gus! Mr. Colpoys, you just take my hat off!

[COLPOYS *rises, imitating the manners of a woman, and deposits the hat on the sofa.*

ABLETT.

Ho, ho, ho! oh, don't Mr. Colpoys! oh, don't, sir!

[COLPOYS *returns to the table.*

GADD.

[*Quietly to* IMOGEN.] It makes me sick to watch Colpoys in private life. He'd stand on his head in the street, if he could get a ragged infant to laugh at him. [*Picking the leg of a fowl furiously.*] What I say is this. Why can't an actor, in private life, be simply a gentleman? [*Loudly and haughtily.*] More tongue here!

ABLETT.

[*Hurrying to him.*] Yessir, certainly, sir. [*Again discomposed by some antic on the part of* COLPOYS.] Oh, don't, Mr. Colpoys! [*Going to* TELFER *with* GADD'S *plate—speaking while* TELFER *carves a slice of tongue.*] I shan't easily forget this afternoon, Mr. Telfer. [*Exhausted.*] This 'll be something to tell Mrs. Ablett. Ho, ho! oh, dear, oh, dear!

[ABLETT, *averting his face from* COLPOYS, *brings back* GADD'S *plate. By an unfortunate chance,* ABLETT'S *glove has found its way to the plate and is handed to* GADD *by* ABLETT.

GADD.

[*Picking up the glove in disgust.*] Merciful powers! what's this!

ABLETT.

[*Taking the glove.*] I beg your pardon, sir—my error, entirely.

[*A firm rat-tat-tat at the front door is heard. There is a general exclamation. At the same moment* SARAH, *a diminutive servant in a crinoline, appears in the doorway.*

SARAH.

[*Breathlessly.*] The kerridge has just drove up!

[IMOGEN, GADD, COLPOYS, *and* AVONIA *go to the windows, open them, and look out.* MRS. MOSSOP *hurries away, pushing* SARAH *before her.*

TELFER.

Dear me, dear me! before a single speech has been made.

AVONIA.

[*At the window.*] Rose, do look!

IMOGEN.

[*At the other window.*] Come here, Rose!

ROSE.

[*Shaking her head.*] Ha, ha! I'm in no hurry; I shall see it often enough. [*Turning to* TOM.] Well, the time has arrived. [*Laying down her knife and fork.*] Oh, I'm so sorry, now.

TOM.

[*Brusquely.*] Are you? I'm glad.

ROSE.

Glad! that *is* hateful of you, Tom Wrench!

ARTHUR.

[*Looking at his watch.*] The carriage is certainly two or three minutes before its time, Mr. Telfer.

TELFER.

Two or three——! The speeches, my dear sir, the speeches! [MRS. MOSSOP *returns, panting.*

MRS. MOSSOP.

The footman, a nice-looking young man with hazel eyes, says the carriage and pair can wait for a little bit. They must be back by three, to take their lady into the Park——

TELFER.

[*Rising.*] Ahem! Resume your seats, I beg. Ladies and gentlemen——

AVONIA.

Wait, wait! we're not ready!

[MORTIMER, GADD, COLPOYS, *and* AVONIA *return to their places.* MRS. MOSSOP *also sits again.* ABLETT *stands by the door.*

TELFER.

[*Producing a paper from his breast-pocket.*] Ladies and gentlemen, I devoted some time this morning to the preparation of a list of toasts. I now 'old that list in my hand. The first toast——

[*He pauses, to assume a pair of spectacles.*

GADD.

[*To* IMOGEN.] *He* arranges the toast-list! *he!*

IMOGEN.

[*To* GADD.] Hush!

TELFER.

The first toast that figures 'ere is, naturally, that of The Queen. [*Laying his hand on* ARTHUR'S *shoulder.*] With my young friend's chariot at the door, his horses pawing restlessly and fretfully upon the stones, I am prevented from enlarging, from expatiating, upon the merits of this toast. Suffice it, both Mrs. Telfer and I have had the honour of acting before Her Majesty upon no less than two occasions.

GADD.

[*To* IMOGEN.] Tsch, tsch, tsch! an old story!

TELFER.

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you—[*to* COLPOYS]—the malt is with you, Mr. Colpoys.

COLPOYS.

[*Handing the ale to* TELFER.] Here you are, Telfer.

TELFER.

[*Filling his glass.*] I give you The Queen, coupling with that toast the name of Miss Violet Sylvester—Mrs. Telfer—formerly, as you are aware, of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Miss Sylvester has so frequently and, if I may say so, so nobly impersonated the various queens of tragedy that I cannot but feel she is a fitting person to acknowledge our expression of loyalty. [*Raising his glass.*] The Queen! And Miss Violet Sylvester!

[*All rise, except* MRS. TELFER, *and drink the toast. After drinking* MRS. MOSSOP *passes her tumbler to* ABLETT.

ABLETT.

The Queen! Miss Vi'lent Sylvester!

[*He drinks and returns the glass to* MRS. MOSSOP. *The company being reseated,* MRS. TELFER *rises. Her reception is a polite one.*

MRS. TELFER.

[*Heavily.*] Ladies and gentlemen, I have played fourteen or fifteen queens in my time——

TELFER.

Thirteen, my love, to be exact; I was calculating this morning.

MRS. TELFER.

Very well, I have played thirteen of 'em. And, as parts, they are not worth a tinker's oath. I thank you for the favour with which you have received me.

[*She sits; the applause is heartier. During the demonstration* SARAH *appears in the doorway, with a kitchen chair.*

ABLETT.

[*To* SARAH.] Wot's all this?

SARAH.

[*To* ABLETT.] Is the speeches on?

ABLETT.

H'on! yes, and you be h'off!

[*She places the chair against the open door and sits, full of determination. At intervals* ABLETT *vainly represents to her the impropriety of her proceeding.*

TELFER.

[*Again rising.*] Ladies and gentlemen. Bumpers, I charge ye! The toast I 'ad next intended to propose was Our Immortal Bard, Shakespeare, and I had meant, myself, to 'ave offered a few remarks in response——

GADD.

[*To* IMOGEN, *bitterly.*] Ha!

TELFER.

But with our friend's horses champing their bits, I am compelled—nay, forced—to postpone this toast to a later period of the day, and to give you now what we may justly designate the toast of the afternoon. Ladies and gentlemen, we are about to lose, to part with, one of our companions, a young comrade who came amongst us many months ago, who in fact joined the company of the "Wells" last February twelvemonth, after a considerable experience in the provinces of this great country.

COLPOYS.

Hear, hear!

AVONIA.

[*Tearfully.*] Hear, hear! [*With a sob.*] I detested her at first.

COLPOYS.

Order!

IMOGEN.

Be quiet, 'Vonia!

TELFER.

Her late mother an actress, herself made familiar with the stage from childhood if not from infancy, Miss Rose Trelawny—for I will no longer conceal

from you that it is to Miss Trelawny I refer—— [*Loud applause.*] Miss Trelawny is the stuff of which great actresses are made.

ALL.

Hear, hear!

ABLETT.

[*Softly.*] 'Ear, 'ear!

TELFER.

So much for the actress. Now for the young lady —nay, the woman, the gyirl. Rose is a good girl—— [*Loud applause, to which* ABLETT *and* SARAH *contribute largely.* AVONIA *rises and impulsively embraces* ROSE. *She is recalled to her seat by a general remonstrance.*] A good girl——

MRS. TELFER.

[*Clutching a knife.*] Yes, and I should like to hear anybody, man or woman——!

TELFER.

She is a good girl, and will be long remembered by us as much for her private virtues as for the commanding authority of her genius. [*More applause, during which there is a sharp altercation between* ABLETT *and* SARAH.] And now, what has happened to "the expectancy and Rose of the fair state"?

IMOGEN.

Good, Telfer! good!

GADD.

[*To* IMOGEN.] Tsch, tsch! forced! forced!

TELFER.

I will tell you—[*impressively*]—a man has crossed her path.

ABLETT.

[*In a low voice.*] Shame!

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Turning to him.*] Mr. Ablett!

TELFER.

A man—ah, but also a gentle-man. [*Applause.*] A gentleman of probity, a gentleman of honour, and a gentleman of wealth and station. That gentleman, with the modesty of youth,—for I may tell you at once that 'e is not an old man,—comes to us and asks us to give him this gyirl to wife. And, friends, we have done so. A few preliminaries 'ave, I believe, still to be concluded between Mr. Gower and his family, and then the bond will be signed, the compact entered upon, the mutual trust accepted. Riches this youthful pair will possess—but what is gold? May they be rich in each other's society, in each other's love! May they—I can wish them no greater joy—be as happy in their married life as my—my—as Miss Sylvester and I 'ave been in ours! [*Raising his glass.*] Miss Rose Trelawny—Mr. Arthur

Gower! [*The toast is drunk by the company, up-standing. Three cheers are called for by* COLPOYS, *and given. Those who have risen then sit.*] Miss Trelawny.

ROSE.

[*Weeping.*] No, no, Mr. Telfer.

MRS. TELFER.

[*To* TELFER, *softly.*] Let her be for a minute, James.

TELFER.

Mr. Gower.

[ARTHUR *rises and is well received.*

ARTHUR.

Ladies and gentlemen, I—I would I were endowed with Mr. Telfer's flow of—of—of splendid eloquence. But I am no orator, no speaker, and therefore cannot tell you how highly—how deeply I appreciate the—the compliment——

ABLETT.

You deserve it, Mr. Glover!

MRS. MOSSOP.

Hush!

ARTHUR.

All I can say is that I regard Miss Trelawny in the light of a—a solemn charge, and I—I trust that, if

ever I have the pleasure of—of meeting any of you again, I shall be able to render a good—a—a—satisfactory—satisfactory——

TOM.

[*In an audible whisper.*] Account.

ARTHUR.

Account of the way—of the way—in which I—in which—— [*Loud applause.*] Before I bring these observations to a conclusion, let me assure you that it has been a great privilege to me to meet—to have been thrown with—a band of artists—whose talents—whose striking talents—whose talents——

TOM.

[*Kindly, behind his hand.*] Sit down.

ARTHUR.

[*Helplessly.*] Whose talents not only interest and instruct the—the more refined residents of this district, but whose talents——

IMOGEN.

[*Quietly* to COLPOYS.] Get him to sit down.

ARTHUR.

The fame of whose talents, I should say——

COLPOYS.

[*Quietly to* MRS. MOSSOP.] He's to sit down. Tell Mother Telfer.

ARTHUR.

The fame of whose talents has spread to—to regions——

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Quietly to* MRS. TELFER.] They say he's to sit down.

ARTHUR.

To—to quarters of the town—to quarters——

MRS. TELFER.

[*To* ARTHUR.] Sit down!

ARTHUR.

Eh?

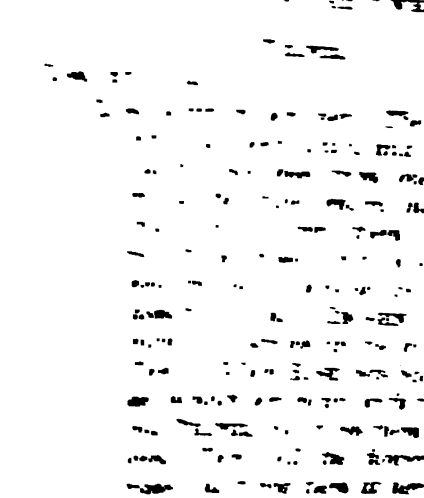
MRS. TELFER.

You finished long ago. Sit down.

ARTHUR.

Thank you. I'm exceedingly sorry. Great Heavens, how wretchedly I've done it!

[*He sits, burying his head in his hands. More applause.*



[*Cheers.*

ROSE.

You and the old "Wells" will have become nothing to me! No, many and many a night you will see me in the house, looking down at you from the Circle—me and my husband——

ARTHUR.

Yes, yes, certainly!

ROSE.

And if you send for me I'll come behind the curtain to you, and sit with you and talk of bygone times, these times that end to-day. And shall I tell you the moments which will be the happiest to me in my life, however happy I may be with Arthur? Why, whenever I find that I am recognized by people, and pointed out—people in the pit of a theatre, in the street, no matter where; and when I can fancy they're saying to each other, "Look! that was Miss Trelawny! you remember—Trelawny! Trelawny of the 'Wells!'"——

[*They cry* "Trelawny!" *and* "Trelawny of the 'Wells!'" *and again* "Trelawny!" *wildly. Then there is the sound of a sharp rat-tat at the front door.* IMOGEN *leaves the piano and looks out of the window.*

IMOGEN.

[*To somebody below.*] What is it?

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

THE SECOND ACT.

The scene represents a spacious drawing-room in a house in Cavendish Square. The walls are sombre in tone, the ceiling dingy, the hangings, though rich, are faded, and altogether the appearance of the room is solemn, formal, and depressing. On the right are folding-doors admitting to a further drawing-room. Beyond these is a single door. The wall on the left is mainly occupied by three sash-windows. The wall facing the spectators is divided by two pilasters into three panels. On the centre panel is a large mirror, reflecting the fireplace; on the right hangs a large oil painting—a portrait of Sir William Gower in his judicial wig and robes. On the left hangs a companion picture—a portrait of Miss Gower. In the corners of the room there are marble columns supporting classical busts, and between the doors stands another marble column, upon which is an oil lamp. Against the lower window there are two chairs and a card-table. Behind a further table supporting a lamp, stands a three-fold screen.

The lamps are lighted, but the curtains are not drawn, and outside the windows it is twilight.

[SIR WILLIAM GOWER *is seated, near a table, asleep, with a newspaper over his head, concealing his face.* MISS TRAFALGAR GOWER *is sitting at the further end of a couch, also asleep, and with a newspaper over her head. At the lower end of this couch sits* MRS. DE FŒNIX—CLARA—*a young lady of nineteen, with a "married" air. She is engaged upon some crochet work. On the other side of the room, near a table,* ROSE *is seated, wearing the look of a boredom which has reached the stony stage. On another couch* ARTHUR *sits, gazing at his boots, his hands in his pockets. On the right of this couch stands* CAPTAIN DE FŒNIX, *leaning against the wall, his mouth open, his head thrown back, and his eyes closed.* DE FŒNIX *is a young man of seven-and-twenty—an example of the heavily-whiskered "swell" of the period. Everybody is in dinner-dress. After a moment or two* ARTHUR *rises and tiptoes down to* ROSE. CLARA *raises a warning finger and says "Hush!" He nods to her, in assent.*

ARTHUR.

[*On* ROSE'S *left—in a whisper.*] Quiet, isn't it?

ROSE.

[*To him, in a whisper.*] Quiet! Arthur——! [*Clutching his arm.*] Oh, this dreadful half-hour after dinner, every, *every* evening!

ARTHUR.

[*Creeping across to the right of the table and sitting there.*] Grandfather and Aunt Trafalgar must wake up soon. They're longer than usual to-night.

ROSE.

[*To him, across the table.*] Your sister Clara, over there, and Captain de Fœnix—when they were courting, did they have to go through this?

ARTHUR.

Yes.

ROSE.

And now that they are married, they still endure it!

ARTHUR.

Yes.

ROSE.

And we, when *we* are married, Arthur, shall *we*——?

ARTHUR.

Yes. I suppose so.

ROSE.

[*Passing her hand across her brow.*] Phe—ew!

[DE FŒNIX, *fast asleep, is now swaying, and in danger of toppling over.* CLARA *grasps the situation and rises.*

CLARA.

[*In a guttural whisper.*] Ah, Frederick! no, no, no!

ROSE AND ARTHUR.

[*Turning in their chairs.*] Eh—what——? ah—h—h—h!

[*As* CLARA *reaches her husband, he lurches forward into her arms.*

DE FŒNIX.

[*His eyes bolting.*] Oh! who——?

CLARA.

Frederick dear, wake!

DE FŒNIX.

[*Dazed.*] How did this occur?

CLARA.

You were tottering, and I caught you.

DE FŒNIX.

[*Collecting his senses.*] I wemember. I placed myself in an upwight position, dearwest, to prewent myself dozing.

CLARA.

[*Sinking on to the couch.*] How you alarmed me!

[*Seeing that* ROSE *is laughing,* DE FŒNIX *comes down to her.*

DE FŒNIX.

[*In a low voice.*] Might have been a very serwious accident, Miss Trelawny.

ROSE.

[*Seating herself on the footstool.*] Never mind! [*Pointing to the chair she has vacated.*] Sit down and talk. [*He glances at the old people and shakes his head.*] Oh, do, do, do! do sit down, and let us all have a jolly whisper. [*He sits.*] Thank you, Captain Fred. Go on! tell me something—anything; something about the military——

DE FŒNIX.

[*Again looking at the old people, then wagging his finger at* ROSE.] I know; you want to get me into a wow. [*Settling himself into his chair.*] Howwid girl!

ROSE.

[*Despairingly.*] Oh—h—h!

[*There is a brief pause, and then the sound of a street-organ, playing in the distance, is heard. The air is "Ever of Thee."*

ROSE.

Hark! [*Excitedly.*] Hark!

CLARA, ARTHUR, AND DE FŒNIX.

Hush!

ROSE.

[*Heedlessly.*] The song I sang in *The Pedlar—The Pedlar of Marseilles!* the song that used to make you cry, Arthur——! [*They attempt vainly to hush her down, but she continues dramatically, in hoarse whispers.*] And then Raphael enters—comes on to the bridge. The music continues, softly. "Raphael, why have you kept me waiting? Man, do you wish to break my heart—[*thumping her breast*] a woman's hear—r—rt, Raphael?"

[SIR WILLIAM *and* MISS GOWER *suddenly whip off their newspapers and sit erect.* SIR WILLIAM *is a grim, bullet-headed old gentleman of about seventy;* MISS GOWER *a spare, prim lady, of gentle manners, verging upon sixty. They stare at each other for a moment, silently.*

SIR WILLIAM.

What a hideous riot, Trafalgar!

MISS GOWER.

Rose, dear, I hope I have been mistaken—but

through my sleep I fancied I could hear you shrieking at the top of your voice.

[SIR WILLIAM *gets on to his feet; all rise, except* ROSE, *who remains seated sullenly.*

SIR WILLIAM.

Trafalgar, it is becoming impossible for you and me to obtain repose. [*Turning his head sharply.*] Ha! is not that a street-organ? [*To* MISS GOWER.] An organ?

MISS GOWER.

Undoubtedly. An organ in the Square, at this hour of the evening—singularly out of place!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Looking round.*] Well, well, well, does no one stir?

ROSE.

[*Under her breath.*] Oh, don't stop it!

[CLARA *goes out quickly. With a great show of activity* ARTHUR *and* DE FŒNIX *hurry across the room and, when there, do nothing.*

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Coming upon* ROSE *and peering down at her.*] What are ye upon the floor for, my dear? Have we no cheers? [*To* MISS GOWER—*producing his snuff-box.*] Do we lack cheers here, Trafalgar?

MISS GOWER.

[*Going to* ROSE.] My dear Rose! [*Raising her.*] Come, come, come, this is quite out of place! Young ladies do not crouch and huddle upon the ground—do they, William?

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Taking snuff.*] A moment ago I should have hazarded the opinion that they do not. [*Chuckling unpleasantly.*] He, he, he!

[CLARA *returns. The organ music ceases abruptly.*

CLARA.

[*Coming to* SIR WILLIAM.] Charles was just running out to stop the organ when I reached the hall, grandpa.

SIR WILLIAM.

Ye'd surely no intention, Clara, of venturing, yourself, into the public street—the open Square——?

CLARA.

[*Faintly.*] I meant only to wave at the man from the door——

MISS GOWER.

Oh, Clara, that would hardly have been in place!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Raising his hands.*] In mercy's name, Trafalgar, what *is* befalling my household?

MISS GOWER.

[*Bursting into tears.*] Oh, William——!

[ROSE *and* CLARA *creep away and join the others.* MISS GOWER *totters to* SIR WILLIAM *and drops her head upon his breast.*

SIR WILLIAM.

Tut, tut, tut, tut!

MISS GOWER.

[*Between her sobs.*] I—I—I—I know what is in your mind.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Drawing a long breath.*] Ah—h—h—h!

MISS GOWER.

Oh, my dear brother, be patient!

SIR WILLIAM.

Patient!

MISS GOWER.

Forgive me; I should have said hopeful. Be hopeful that I shall yet succeed in ameliorating the disturbing conditions which are affecting us so cruelly.

SIR WILLIAM.

Ye never will, Trafalgar; *I've* tried.

MISS GOWER.

Oh, do not despond already! I feel sure there are good ingredients in Rose's character. [*Clinging to him.*] In time, William, we shall shape her to be a fitting wife for our rash and unfortunate Arthur—— [*He shakes his head.*] In time, William, in time!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Soothing her.*] Well, well, well! there, there, there! At least, my dear sister, I am perfectly aweer that I possess in you the woman above all others whose example should compel such a transformation.

MISS GOWER.

[*Throwing her arms about his neck.*] Oh, brother, what a compliment——!

SIR WILLIAM.

Tut, tut, tut! And now, before Charles sets the card-table, don't you think we had better—eh, Trafalgar?

MISS GOWER.

Yes, yes—our disagreeable duty; let us discharge it. [SIR WILLIAM *takes snuff.*] Rose, dear, be seated. [*To everybody.*] The Vice-Chancellor has something to say to us. Let us all be seated.

[*There is consternation among the young people. All sit.*

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Peering about him.*] Are ye seated?

EVERYBODY.

Yes.

SIR WILLIAM.

What I desire to say is this. When Miss Trelawny took up her residence here, it was thought proper, in the peculiar circumstances of the case, that you, Arthur—[*pointing a finger at* ARTHUR] you——

ARTHUR.

Yes, sir.

SIR WILLIAM.

That you should remove yourself to the establishment of your sister Clara and her husband in Holles Street, round the corner——

ARTHUR.

Yes, sir.

CLARA.

Yes, grandpa.

DE FŒNIX.

Certainly, Sir William.

SIR WILLIAM.

Taking your food in this house, and spending other certain hours here, under the surveillance of your great-aunt Trafalgar.

MISS GOWER.

Yes, William.

SIR WILLIAM.

This was considered to be a decorous, and, toward Miss Trelawny, a highly respectful, course to pursue.

ARTHUR.

Yes, sir.

MISS GOWER.

Any other course would have been out of place.

SIR WILLIAM.

And yet—[*again extending a finger at* ARTHUR] what is this that is reported to me?

ARTHUR.

I don't know, sir.

SIR WILLIAM.

I hear that ye have on several occasions, at night, after having quitted this house with Captain and Mrs. De Fœnix, been seen on the other side of the way, your back against the railings, gazing up at Miss Trelawny's window; and that you have remained in that position for a considerable space of time. Is this true, sir?

ROSE.

[*Boldly.*] Yes, Sir William.

SIR WILLIAM.

I venture to put a question to my grandson, Miss Trelawny.

ARTHUR.

Yes, sir, it is quite true.

SIR WILLIAM.

Then, sir, let me acqueent you that these are not the manners, nor the practices, of a gentleman.

ARTHUR.

No, sir?

SIR WILLIAM.

No, sir, they are the manners, and the practices, of a Troubadour.

MISS GOWER.

A troubadour in Cavendish Square! quite out of place!

ARTHUR.

I—I'm very sorry, sir; I—I never looked at it in that light.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Snuffing.*] Ah—h—h—h! ho! pi—i—i—sh!

ARTHUR.

But at the same time, sir, I dare say—of course I don't speak from precise knowledge—but I dare say there were a good many—a good many——

SIR WILLIAM.

Good many—what sir?

ARTHUR.

A good many very respectable troubadours, sir——

ROSE.

[*Starting to her feet, heroically and defiantly.*] And what I wish to say, Sir William, is this. I wish to avow, to declare before the world, that Arthur and I have had many lengthy interviews while he has been stationed against those railings over there; I murmuring to him softly from my bedroom window, he responding in tremulous whispers——

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Struggling to his feet*]. You—you tell me such things——! [*All rise.*

MISS GOWER.

The Square, in which we have resided for years——! Our neighbours——!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Shaking a trembling hand at* ARTHUR.] The—the character of my house——!

ARTHUR.

Again I am extremely sorry, sir—but these are the only confidential conversations Rose and I now enjoy.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Turning upon* CLARA *and* DE FŒNIX.] And you, Captain de Fœnix—an officer and a gentleman! and you, Clara! this could scarcely have been without your cognizance, without, perhaps, your approval——!

[CHARLES, *in plush and powder and wearing luxuriant whiskers, enters, carrying two branch candlesticks with lighted candles.*

CHARLES.

The cawd-table, Sir William?

MISS GOWER.

[*Agitatedly.*] Yes, yes, by all means, Charles; the card-table, as usual. [*To* SIR WILLIAM.] A rubber will comfort you, soothe you——

[CHARLES *carries the candlesticks to the card-table,* SIR WILLIAM *and* MISS GOWER *seat themselves upon a couch, she with her arm through his affectionately.* CLARA *and* DE FŒNIX *get behind the screen; their scared faces are seen occasionally over the top of it.* CHARLES *brings the card-table, opens it and arranges it, placing four chairs, which he collects from different parts of the room, round the table.* ROSE *and* ARTHUR *talk in rapid undertones.*

ROSE.

Infamous! infamous!

ARTHUR.

Be calm, Rose, dear, be calm!

ROSE.

Tyrannical! diabolical! I cannot endure it.

[*She throws herself into a chair. He stands behind her, apprehensively, endeavouring to calm her.*

ARTHUR.

[*Over her shoulder.*] They mean well, dearest——

ROSE.

[*Hysterically.*] Well! ha, ha, ha!

ARTHUR.

But they are rather old-fashioned people——

ROSE.

Old-fashioned! they belong to the time when men and women were put to the torture. I am being tortured—mentally tortured——

ARTHUR.

They have not many more years in this world——

ROSE.

Nor I, at this rate, many more months. They are killing me—like Agnes in *The Spectre of St. Ives.* She expires, in the fourth act, as I shall die in Cavendish Square, painfully, of no recognized disorder——

ARTHUR.

And anything we can do to make them happy——

ROSE.

To make the Vice-Chancellor happy! I won't try! I will not! he's a fiend, a vampire——!

ARTHUR.

Oh, hush!

ROSE.

[*Snatching up* SIR WILLIAM'S *snuff-box, which he has left upon the table.*] His snuff-box! I wish I could poison his snuff, as Lucrezia Borgia would have done. *She* would have removed him within two hours of my arrival—I mean, her arrival. [*Opening the snuff-box and mimicking* SIR WILLIAM.] And here he sits and lectures me, and dictates to me! to Miss Trelawny! "I venture to put a question to my grandson, Miss Trelawny!" Ha, ha! [*Taking a pinch of snuff, thoughtlessly but vigorously.*] "Yah—h—h—h! pish! Have we no cheers? do we lack cheers here, Trafalgar?" [*Suddenly.*] Oh——!

ARTHUR.

What have you done?

ROSE.

[*In suspense, replacing the snuff-box.*] The snuff——!

ARTHUR.

Rose, dear!

ROSE.

[*Putting her handkerchief to her nose, and rising.*] Ah——!

[CHARLES, *having prepared the card-table, and arranged the candlesticks upon it, has withdrawn.* MISS GOWER *and* SIR WILLIAM *now rise.*

MISS GOWER.

The table is prepared, William. Arthur, I assume you would prefer to sit and contemplate Rose——?

ARTHUR.

Thank you, aunt.

[ROSE *sneezes violently, and is led away, helplessly, by* ARTHUR.

MISS GOWER.

[*To* ROSE.] Oh, my dear child! [*Looking round.*] Where are Frederick and Clara?

CLARA AND DE FŒNIX.

[*Appearing from behind the screen, shamefacedly.*] Here.

[*The intending players cut the pack and seat themselves.* SIR WILLIAM *sits facing* CAPTAIN DE FŒNIX, MISS GOWER *on the right of the table, and* CLARA *on the left.*

ARTHUR.

[*While this is going on, to* ROSE.] Are you in pain, dearest? Rose!

ROSE.

Agony!

ARTHUR.

Pinch your upper lip——

[*She sneezes twice, loudly, and sinks back upon the couch.*

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Testily.*] Sssh! sssh! sssh! this is to be whist, I hope.

MISS GOWER.

Rose, Rose! young ladies do not sneeze quite so continuously. [DE FŒNIX *is dealing.*

SIR WILLIAM.

[*With gusto.*] I will thank you, Captain de Fœnix, to exercise your intelligence this evening to its furthest limit.

DE FŒNIX.

I'll twy, sir.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Laughing unpleasantly.*] He, he, he! last night, sir——

CLARA.

Poor Frederick had toothache last night, grandpa.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Tartly.*] Whist is whist, Clara, and toothache is toothache. We will endeavour to keep the two things distinct, if you please. He, he!

MISS GOWER.

Your interruption was hardly in place, Clara, dear, —ah!

DE FŒNIX.

Hey! what——?

MISS GOWER.

A misdeal.

CLARA.

[*Faintly.*] Oh, Frederick!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Partly rising.*] Captain de Fœnix!

DE FŒNIX.

I—I'm fwightfully gwieved, sir——

[*The cards are re-dealt by* MISS GOWER. ROSE *now gives way to a violent paroxysm of sneezing.* SIR WILLIAM *rises.*

MISS GOWER.

William——! [*The players rise.*

SIR WILLIAM.

[*To the players.*] Is this whist, may I ask?

[*They sit.*

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Standing.*] Miss Trelawny——

ROSE.

[*Weakly.*] I—I think I had better—what d'ye call it?—withdraw for a few moments.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Sitting again.*] Do so.

[ROSE *disappears.* ARTHUR *is leaving the room with her.*

MISS GOWER.

[*Sharply.*] Arthur! where are you going?

ARTHUR.

[*Returning promptly.*] I beg your pardon, aunt.

MISS GOWER.

Really, Arthur——!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Rapping upon the table.*] Tsch, tsch, tsch!

MISS GOWER.

Forgive me, William. [*They play.*

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Intent upon his cards.*] My snuff-box, Arthur; be so obleeging as to search for it.

ARTHUR.

[*Brightly.*] I'll bring it to you, sir. It is on the——

SIR WILLIAM.

Keep your voice down, sir. We are playing—[*emphatically throwing down a card, as fourth player*] whist. Mine.

MISS GOWER.

[*Picking up the trick.*] No, William.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Glaring.*] No!

MISS GOWER.

Clara played a trump.

DE FŒNIX.

Yes, sir, Clara played a trump—the seven——

SIR WILLIAM.

I will not trouble you, Captain de Fœnix, to echo Miss Gower's information.

DE FŒNIX.

Vevy sowwy, sir.

MISS GOWER.

[*Gently.*] It *was* a *little* out of place, Frederick.

SIR WILLIAM.

Sssh! whist. [ARTHUR *is now on* SIR WILLIAM'S *right, with the snuff-box.*] Eh? what? [*Taking the snuff-box from* ARTHUR.] Oh, thank ye. Much obleeged, much obleeged.

[ARTHUR *walks away and picks up a book.* SIR WILLIAM *turns in his chair, watching* ARTHUR.

MISS GOWER.

You to play, William. [*A pause.*] William, dear——?

[*She also turns, following the direction of his gaze. Laying down his cards,* SIR WILLIAM *leaves the card-table and goes over to* ARTHUR *slowly. Those at the card-table look on apprehensively.*

SIR WILLIAM.

[*In a queer voice.*] Arthur.

ARTHUR.

[*Shutting his book.*] Excuse me, grandfather.

SIR WILLIAM.

Ye—ye're a troublesome young man, Arthur.

ARTHUR.

I—I don't mean to be one, sir.

SIR WILLIAM.

As your poor father was, before ye. And if you are fool enough to marry, and to beget children, doubtless your son will follow the same course. [*Taking snuff.*] Y—y—yes, but I shall be dead 'n' gone by that time, it's likely. Ah—h—h—h! pi—i—i—sh! I shall be sitting in the Court Above by that time—— [*From the adjoining room comes the sound of* ROSE'S *voice singing "Ever of Thee" to the piano. There is great consternation at the card-table.* ARTHUR *is moving towards the folding-doors,* SIR WILLIAM *detains him.*] No, no, let her go on, I beg. Let her continue. [*Returning to the card-table, with deadly calmness.*] We will suspend our game while this young lady performs her operas.

MISS GOWER.

[*Rising and taking his arm.*] William——!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*In the same tone.*] I fear this is no longer a comfortable home for ye, Trafalgar; no longer the home for a gentlewoman. I apprehend that in these days my house approaches somewhat closely to a Pandemonium. [*Suddenly taking up the cards, in a fury, and flinging them across the room.*] And this is whist—whist——!

CLARA *and* DE FŒNIX *rise and stand together.* ARTHUR *pushes open the upper part of the folding-doors.*

ARTHUR.

Rose! stop! Rose!

[*The song ceases and* ROSE *appears.*

ROSE.

[*At the folding-doors.*] Did anyone call?

ARTHUR.

You have upset my grandfather.

MISS GOWER.

Miss Trelawny, how—how dare you do anything so—so out of place?

ROSE.

There's a piano in there, Miss Gower.

MISS GOWER.

You are acquainted with the rule of this household—no music when the Vice-Chancellor is within doors.

ROSE.

But there are so many rules. One of them is that you may not sneeze.

MISS GOWER.

Ha! you must never answer——

ROSE.

No, that's another rule.

MISS GOWER.

Oh, for shame!

ARTHUR.

You see, aunt, Rose is young, and—and—you make no allowance for her, give her no chance——

MISS GOWER.

Great heaven! what is this you are charging me with?

ARTHUR.

I don't think the "rules" of this house are fair to Rose! oh, I must say it—they are horribly unfair!

MISS GOWER.

[*Clinging to* SIR WILLIAM.] Brother!

SIR WILLIAM.

Trafalgar! [*Putting her aside and advancing to* ARTHUR.] Oh, indeed, sir! and so you deliberately accuse your great-aunt of acting toward ye and Miss Trelawny *malâ fide*——

ARTHUR.

Grandfather, what I intended to——

SIR WILLIAM.

I will afford ye the opportunity of explaining what ye intended to convey, downstairs, at once, in the library. [*A general shudder.*] Obleege me by following me, sir. [*To* CLARA *and* DE FŒNIX.] Captain de Fœnix, I see no prospect of any further social relaxation this evening. You and Clara will do me the favour of attending in the hall, in readiness to take this young man back to Holles Street. [*Giving his arm to* MISS GOWER.] My dear sister—— [*To* ARTHUR.] Now, sir.

[SIR WILLIAM *and* MISS GOWER *go out.* ARTHUR *comes to* ROSE *and kisses her.*

ARTHUR.

Good-night, dearest. Oh, good-night! Oh, Rose——!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Outside the door.*] Mr. Arthur Gower!

ARTHUR.

I am coming, sir—— [*He goes out quickly.*

DE FŒNIX.

[*Approaching* ROSE *and taking her hand sympathetically.*] Haw——! I—weally—haw!——

ROSE.

Yes, I know what you would say. Thank you, Captain Fred.

CLARA.

[*Embracing* ROSE.] Never mind! we will continue to let Arthur out at night as usual. I am a married woman! [*joining* DE FŒNIX], and a married woman will turn, if you tread upon her often enough——!

[DE FŒNIX *and* CLARA *depart.*

ROSE.

[*Pacing the room, shaking her hands in the air desperately.*] Oh—h—h! ah—h—h!

[*The upper part of the folding-doors opens, and* CHARLES *appears.*

CHARLES.

[*Mysteriously.*] Miss Rose——

ROSE.

What——?

CHARLES.

[*Advancing.*] I see Sir William h'and the rest descend the stairs. I 'ave been awaitin' the chawnce of 'andin' you this, Miss Rose.

[*He produces a dirty scrap of paper, wet and limp, with writing upon it, and gives it to her.*

ROSE.

[*Handling it daintly.*] Oh, it's damp!——

CHARLES.

Yes, miss; a little gentle shower 'ave been takin' place h'outside—'eat spots, cook says.

ROSE.

[*Reading.*] Ah! from some of my friends.

CHARLES.

[*Behind his hand.*] Perfesshunnal, Miss Rose?

ROSE.

[*Intent upon the note.*] Yes—yes——

CHARLES.

I was reprimandin' the organ, miss, when I observed them lollin' against the square railin's examinin' h'our premises, and they wentured for to beckon me. An egstremely h'affable party, miss. [*Hiding his face.*] Ho! one of them caused me to laff!

ROSE.

[*Excitedly.*] They want to speak to me—[*referring to the note*] to impart something to me of an important nature. Oh, Charles, I know not what to do!

CHARLES.

[*Languishingly.*] Whatever friends may loll against them railin's h'opposite, Miss Rose, you 'ave one true friend in this 'ouse—Chawles Gibbons——

ROSE.

Thank you, Charles. Mr. Briggs, the butler, is sleeping out to-night, isn't he?

CHARLES.

Yes, miss, he 'ave leave to sleep at his sister's. I 'appen to know he 'ave gone to Cremorne.

ROSE.

Then, when Sir William and Miss Gower have retired, do you think you could let me go forth; and wait at the front door while I run across and grant my friends a hurried interview?

CHARLES.

Suttingly, miss.

ROSE.

If it reached the ears of Sir William, or Miss Gower, you would lose your place, Charles!

CHARLES.

[*Haughtily.*] I'm aweer, miss; but Sir William was egstremely rood to me dooring dinner, over that mis'ap to the ontray—— [*A bell rings violently.* S'william!

[*He goes out. The rain is heard pattering against the window panes.* ROSE *goes from one window to another, looking out. It is now almost black outside the windows.*

ROSE.

[*Discovering her friends.*] Ah! yes, yes! ah—h—h—h! [*She snatches an antimacassar from a chair and jumping on to the couch, waves it frantically to those outside.*] The dears! the darlings! the faithful creatures——! [*Listening.*] Oh——!

[*She descends, in a hurry, and flings the antimacassar under the couch, as* MISS GOWER *enters. At the same moment there is a vivid flash of lightning.*

MISS GOWER.

[*Startled.*] Oh, how dreadful! [*To* ROSE, *frigidly.*] The Vice-Chancellor has *felt* the few words he has addressed to Arthur, and has retired for the night. [*There is a roll of thunder.* ROSE *is alarmed;* MISS GOWER *clings to a chair*] Mercy on us! Go to bed, child, directly. We will all go to our beds, hoping to awake to-morrow in a meeker

and more submissive spirit. [*Kissing* ROSE *upon the brow.*] Good-night. [*Another flash of lightning.*] Oh——! Don't omit to say your prayers, Rose—and in a simple manner. I always fear that, from your peculiar training, you may declaim them. That is so out of place—oh——!

[*Another roll of thunder.* ROSE *goes across the room, meeting* CHARLES, *who enters carrying a lantern. They exchange significant glances, and she disappears.*

CHARLES.

[*Coming to* MISS GOWER.] I am now at liberty to accompany you round the 'ouse, ma'am——

[*A flash of lightning.*

MISS GOWER.

Ah——! [*Her hand to her heart.*] Thank you, Charles—but to-night I must ask you to see that everything is secure, alone. This storm—so very seasonable; but, from girlhood, I could never—— [*A roll of thunder.*] Oh, good-night!

[*She flutters away. The rain beats still more violently upon the window panes.*

CHARLES.

[*Glancing at the window.*] Ph—e—e—w! Great 'evans!

[*He is dropping the curtains at the window when* ROSE *appears at the folding-doors.*

ROSE.

[*In a whisper.*] Charles!

CHARLES.

Miss?

ROSE.

[*Coming into the room, distractedly.*] Miss Gower has gone to bed.

CHARLES.

Yes, miss—oh——! [*A flash of lightning.*

ROSE.

Oh! my friends! my poor friends!

CHARLES.

H'and Mr. Briggs at Cremorne! Reelly, I should 'ardly advise you to wenture h'out, miss——

ROSE.

Out! no! Oh, but get them in!

CHARLES.

In, Miss Rose! indoors!

ROSE.

Under cover—— [*A roll of thunder.*] Oh! [*Wringing her hands.*] They are my friends! is it a rule that I am never to see a friend, that I mayn't even give a friend shelter in a violent storm? [*To* CHARLES.] Are you the only one up?

CHARLES.

I b'lieve so, miss. Any'ow the wimming-servants is quite h'under my control.

ROSE.

Then tell my friends to be deathly quiet, and to creep—to tip-toe—— [*The rain strikes the window again. She picks up the lantern which* CHARLES *has deposited upon the floor, and gives it to him.* Make haste! I'll draw the curtains—— [*He hurries out. She goes from window to window, dropping the curtains, talking to herself excitedly as she does so.*] My friends! my own friends! ah! I'm not to sneeze in this house! nor to sing! or breathe, next! wretches! oh, my! wretches! [*Blowing out the candles and removing the candlesticks to the table, singing, under her breath, wildly.*] "Ever of thee I'm fondly dreaming——" [*Mimicking* SIR WILLIAM *again.*] "What are ye upon the floor for, my dear? Have we no cheers? do we lack cheers here, Trafalgar——?" [CHARLES *returns.*

CHARLES.

[*To those who follow him.*] Hush! [*To* ROSE.] I discovered 'em clustered in the doorway——

[*There is a final peal of thunder as* AVONIA, GADD, COLPOYS, *and* TOM WRENCH *enter, somewhat diffidently. They are apparently soaked to their skins, and are altogether in a deplorable condition.* AVONIA

alone has an umbrella, which she allows to drip upon the carpet, but her dress and petticoats are bedraggled, her finery limp, her hair lank and loose.

ROSE.

'Vonia!

AVONIA.

[*Coming to her, and embracing her fervently.*] Oh, ducky, ducky, ducky! oh, but what a storm!

ROSE.

Hush! how wet you are! [*Shaking hands with* GADD] Ferdinand—[*crossing to* COLPOYS *and shaking hands with him*] Augustus—[*shaking hands with* TOM] Tom Wrench——

AVONIA.

[*To* CHARLES.] Be so kind as to put my umbrella on the landing, will you? Oh, thank you very much, I'm sure.

[CHARLES *withdraws with the umbrella.* GADD *and* COLPOYS *shake the rain from their hats on to the carpet and furniture.*

TOM.

[*Quietly, to* ROSE.] It's a shame to come down on you in this way. But they would do it, and I thought I'd better stick to 'em.

GADD.

[*Who is a little flushed and unsteady.*] Ha
remember this accursed evening.

AVONIA.

Oh, Ferdy——!

ROSE.

Hush! you must be quiet. Everybody has
bed, and I—I'm not sure I'm allowed to rece
ture——

AVONIA.

Oh!

GADD.

Then we are intruders!

ROSE.

I mean, such late visitors.

[*Colpoys has taken off his coat, and*
ing it vigorously.

AVONIA.

Stop it, Augustus! ain't I wet enough! [*T*
Yes, it is latish, but I so wanted to inform yo
—[*bringing* GADD *forward*] allow me to in
—my husband.

ROSE.

Oh! no!

AVONIA.

[*Laughing merrily.*] Yes! ha, ha, ha!

ROSE.

Sssh, sssh, sssh!

AVONIA.

I forgot. [*To* GADD.] Oh, darling Ferdy, you're positively soaked! [*To* ROSE.] Do let him take his coat off, like Gussy——

GADD.

[*Jealously.*] 'Vonia, not so much of the Gussy!

AVONIA.

There you are, flying out again! as if Mr. Colpoys wasn't an old friend!

GADD.

Old friend or no old friend——

ROSE.

[*Diplomatically.*] Certainly, take your coat off, Ferdinand.

[GADD *joins* COLPOYS; *they spread out their coats upon the couch.*

ROSE.

[*Feeling* TOM'S *coat sleeve.*] And you?

TOM.

[*After glancing at the others—quietly.*] No, thank you.

[illegible]

[illegible] Ferdy and I were married [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] on our honeymoon [illegible] a fortnight after [illegible] could fix any- [illegible] elsewhere; and as we [illegible] know if never [illegible] season—we thought [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] can live almost on [illegible] ceterer; and so, being [illegible] we went off to church [illegible] such a save. [*Look-* [illegible] Ferdy——!

[illegible]

[illegible] *dreamily.*] Yes, [illegible]——

[illegible]

[illegible] GADD.] Child, I confess [illegible]

TOM.

[*Taking* COLPOYS *by the arm and swinging him away from* ROSE.] Enough of that, Colpoys!

COLPOYS.

What!

ROSE.

[*Rising.*] Hush!

TOM.

[*Under his breath.*] If you've never learnt how to behave——

COLPOYS.

Don't you teach behaviour, sir, to a gentleman who plays a superior line of business to yourself! [*Muttering.*] 'Pon my soul! rum start——!

AVONIA.

[*Going to* ROSE.] Of course I ought to have written to you, dear, properly, but you remember the weeks it takes me to write a letter—— [GADD *sits in the chair* AVONIA *has just quitted; she returns and seats herself upon his knee.*] And so I said to Ferdy, over tea, "Ferdy, let's spend a bit of our honeymoon in doing the West End thoroughly, and going and seeing where Rose Trelawny lives." And we thought it only nice and polite to invite Tom Wrench and Gussy——

GADD.

'Vonia, much less of the Gussy!

AVONIA.

[*Kissing* GADD.] Jealous boy! [*Beaming.*] Oh, and we *have* done the West End thoroughly. There, I've never done the West End so thoroughly in my life! And when we got outside your house I couldn't resist—— [*Her hand on* GADD'S *shirt sleeve.*] Oh, gracious! I'm sure you'll catch your death, my darling——!

ROSE.

I think I can get him some wine. [*To* GADD.] Will you take some wine, Ferdinand?

[GADD *rises, nearly upsetting* AVONIA.

AVONIA.

Ferdy!

GADD.

I thank you. [*With a wave of the hand.*] Anything, anything——

AVONIA.

[*To* ROSE.] Anything that goes with stout, dear.

ROSE.

[*At the door, turning to them.*] 'Vonia—boys—be very still.

AVONIA.

Trust *us!*

[ROSE *tiptoes out.* COLPOYS *is now at the card-table, cutting a pack of cards which remains there.*

COLPOYS.

[*To* GADD.] Gadd, I'll see you for pennies.

GADD.

[*Loftily.*] Done, sir, with you!

[*They seat themselves at the table, and cut for coppers.* TOM *is walking about, surveying the room.*

AVONIA.

[*Taking off her hat and wiping it with her handkerchief.*] Well, Thomas, what do you think of it?

TOM.

This is the kind of chamber I want for the first act of my comedy——

AVONIA.

Oh, lor', your head's continually running on your comedy. Half this blessed evening——

TOM.

I tell you, I won't have doors stuck here, there, and everywhere; no, nor windows in all sorts of impossible places!

AVONIA.

Oh, really! Well, when you do get your play accepted, mind you see that Mr. Manager gives you exactly what you ask for—won't you?

TOM.

You needn't be satirical, if you *are* wet. Yes, I will! [*Pointing to the left.*] Windows on the one side [*pointing to the right*], doors on the other—just where they should be, architecturally. And locks on the doors, *real locks*, to work; and handles—to turn! [*Rubbing his hands together gleefully.*] Ha, ha! you wait! wait——!

[ROSE *re-enters, with a plate of biscuits in her hand, followed by* CHARLES, *who carries a decanter of sherry and some wine-glasses.*

ROSE.

Here, Charles——

[CHARLES *places the decanter and the glasses on the table.*

GADD.

[*Whose luck has been against him, throwing himself, sulkily, on to the couch.*] Bah! I'll risk no further stake.

COLPOYS.

Just because you lose sevenpence in coppers you go on like this!

[CHARLES, *turning from the table, faces* COLPOYS.

COLPOYS.

[*Tearing his hair, and glaring at* CHARLES *wildly.*] Ah—h—h, I am ruined! I have lost my all! my children are beggars——!

CHARLES.

Ho, ho, ho! he, he, he!

ROSE.

Hush, hush! [CHARLES *goes out laughing. To everybody.*] Sherry?

GADD.

[*Rising.*] Sherry!

[AVONIA, COLPOYS, *and* GADD *gather round the table, and help themselves to sherry and biscuits.*

ROSE.

[*To* TOM.] Tom, won't you——?

TOM.

[*Watching* GADD *anxiously.*] No, thank you. The fact is, we—we have already partaken of refreshments, once or twice during the evening——

[COLPOYS *and* AVONIA, *each carrying a glass of wine and munching a biscuit, go to the couch, where they sit.*

GADD.

[*Pouring out sherry—singing.*] "And let me the canakin clink, clink——"

ROSE.

[*Coming to him.*] Be quiet, Gadd!

COLPOYS.

[*Raising his glass.*] The Bride!

ROSE.

[*Turning, kissing her hand to* AVONIA.] Yes, yes—— [GADD *hands* ROSE *his glass; she puts her lips to it.*] The Bride!

[*She returns the glass to* GADD.

GADD.

[*Sitting.*] My bride!

[TOM, *from behind the table, unperceived, takes the decanter and hides it under the table, then sits.* GADD, *missing the decanter, contents himself with the biscuits.*

AVONIA.

Well, Rose, my darling, we've been talking about nothing but ourselves. How are you getting along here?

ROSE.

Getting along? oh, I—I don't fancy I'm getting along very well, thank you!

COLPOYS AND AVONIA.

Not——!

GADD.

[*His mouth full of biscuit.*] Not——!

ROSE.

[*Sitting by the card-table.*] No, boys; no, 'Vonia. The truth is, it isn't as nice as you'd think it. I suppose the Profession had its drawbacks—mother used to say so—but [*raising her arms*] one could fly. Yes, in Brydon Crescent one was a dirty little London sparrow, perhaps; but here, in this grand Square——! Oh, it's the story of the caged bird, over again!

AVONIA.

A love-bird, though.

ROSE.

Poor Arthur? yes, he's a dear. [*Rising.*] But the Gowers—the old Gowers! the Gowers! the Gowers!

[*She paces the room, beating her hands together. In her excitement, she ceases to whisper, and gradually becomes loud and voluble. The others, following her lead, chatter noisily—excepting* TOM, *who sits, thoughtfully, looking before him.*

ROSE.

The ancient Gowers! the venerable Gowers!

AVONIA.

You mean, the grandfather——?

ROSE.

And the aunt—the great-aunt—the great bore of a

great-aunt! The very mention of 'em makes something go "tap, tap, tap, tap" at the top of my head.

AVONIA.

Oh, I *am* sorry to hear this. Well, upon my word——!

ROSE.

Would you believe it? 'Vonia—boys—you'll never believe it! I mayn't walk out with Arthur alone, nor see him here alone. I mayn't sing; no, nor sneeze even——

AVONIA.

[*Shrilly.*] Not sing or sneeze!

COLPOYS.

[*Indignantly.*] Not sneeze!

ROSE.

No, nor sit on the floor—the *floor!*

AVONIA.

Why, when we shared rooms together, you were always on the floor!

GADD.

[*Producing a pipe, and knocking out the ashes on the heel of his boot.*] In Heaven's name, what kind of house can this be!

AVONIA.

I wouldn't stand it, would you, Ferdinand?

GADD.

[*Loading his pipe.*] Gad, no!

AVONIA.

[*To* COLPOYS.] Would you, Gus, dear?

GADD.

[*Under his breath.*] Here! not so much of the Gus dear——

AVONIA.

[*To* COLPOYS.] Would you?

COLPOYS.

No, I'm blessed if I would, my darling.

GADD.

[*His pipe in his mouth.*] Mr. Colpoys! less of the darling!

AVONIA.

[*Rising.*] Rose, don't you put up with it! [*Striking the top of the card-table vigorously.*] I say, don't you stand it! [*Embracing* ROSE.] You're an independent girl, dear; they came to you, these people, not you to them, remember.

ROSE.

[*Sitting on the couch.*] Oh, what can I do? I can't do anything.

AVONIA.

Can't you! [*Coming to* GADD.] Ferdinand, advise her. You tell her how to——

GADD.

[*Who has risen.*] Miss Bunn—Mrs. Gadd, you have been all over Mr. Colpoys this evening, ever since we——

AVONIA.

[*Angrily, pushing him back into his chair.*] Oh, don't be a silly!

GADD.

Madam!

AVONIA.

[*Returning to* COLPOYS.] Gus, Ferdinand's foolish. Come and talk to Rose, and advise her, there's a dear boy——

[COLPOYS *rises; she takes his arm, to lead him to* ROSE. *At that moment* GADD *advances to* COLPOYS *and slaps his face.*

COLPOYS.

Hey——!

GADD.

Miserable viper!

The two men close. TOM *runs to separate them.* ROSE *rises with a cry of terror. There is a struggle and general uproar. The card-table is overturned, with a crash, and* AVONIA *utters a long and piercing shriek. Then the house-bells are heard ringing violently.*

ROSE.

Oh——! [*The combatants part; all look scared. At the door, listening.*] They are moving—coming! Turn out the——!

[*She turns out the light at the table. The room is in half-light as* SIR WILLIAM *enters, cautiously, closely followed by* MISS GOWER. *They are both in dressing-gowns and slippers;* SIR WILLIAM *carries a thick stick and his bedroom candle.* ROSE *is standing by a chair;* GADD, AVONIA, COLPOYS, *and* TOM *are together.*

SIR WILLIAM.

Miss Trelawny——!

MISS GOWER.

Rose——! [*Running behind the screen.*] Men!

SIR WILLIAM.

Who are these people?

ROSE.

[*Advancing a step or two.*] Some friends of mine who used to be at the "Wells" have called upon me, to inquire how I am getting on.

[ARTHUR *enters, quickly.*

ARTHUR.

[*Looking round.*] Oh! Rose——!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Turning upon him.*] Ah—h—h—h! How come you here?

ARTHUR.

I was outside the house. Charles let me in, knowing something was wrong.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Peering into his face.*] Troubadouring——?

ARTHUR.

Troubadouring; yes, sir. [*To* ROSE.] Rose, what is this?

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Fiercely.*] No, sir, this is my affair. [*Placing his candlestick on the table.*] Stand aside! [*Raising his stick furiously.*] Stand aside!

[ARTHUR *moves to the right.*

MISS GOWER.

[*Over the screen.*] William——

SIR WILLIAM.

Hey?

MISS GOWER.

Your ankles——

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Adjusting his dressing-gown.*] I beg your pardon. [*To* ARTHUR.] Yes, I can answer your question. [*Pointing his stick, first at* ROSE, *then at the group.*] Some friends of that young woman's connected with —the playhouse, have favoured us with a visit, for the purpose of ascertaining how she is—getting on. [*Touching* GADD'S *pipe, which is lying at his feet, with the end of his stick.*] A filthy tobacco-pipe. To whom does it belong? whose is it?

[ROSE *picks it up and passes it to* GADD, *bravely.*

ROSE.

It belongs to one of my friends.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Taking* GADD'S *empty wine-glass and holding it to his nose.*] Phu, yes! In brief, a drunken debauch. [*To the group.*] So ye see, gentlemen—[*to* AVONIA] and you, madam; [*to* ARTHUR] and you, sir; you see, all of ye, [*sinking into a chair, and coughing from exhaustion*] exactly how Miss Trelawny is getting on.

MISS GOWER.

[*Over the screen.*] William——

SIR WILLIAM.

What is it?

MISS GOWER.

Your ankles——

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Leaping to his feet, in a frenzy.*] Bah!

MISS GOWER.

Oh, they seem so out of place!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Flourishing his stick.*] Begone! a set of garish, dissolute gipsies! begone!

[GADD, AVONIA, COLPOYS, *and* WRENCH *gather together, the men hastily putting on their coats, etc.*

AVONIA.

Where's my umbrella?

GADD.

A hand with my coat here!

COLPOYS.

'Pon my soul! London artists——!

AVONIA.

We don't want to remain where we're not heartily welcome, I can assure everybody.

SIR WILLIAM.

Open windows! let in the air!

AVONIA.

[*To* ROSE, *who is standing above the wreck of the card-table.*] Good-bye, my dear——

ROSE.

No, no, 'Vonia. Oh, don't leave me behind you!

ARTHUR.

Rose——!

ROSE.

Oh, I'm very sorry, Arthur. [*To* SIR WILLIAM.] Indeed, I am very sorry, Sir William. But you are right—gipsies—gipsies! [*To* ARTHUR.] Yes, Arthur, if you were a gipsy, as I am, as these friends o' mine are, we might be happy together. But I've seen enough of your life, my dear boy, to know that I'm no wife for you. I should only be wretched, and would make you wretched; and the end, when it arrived, as it very soon would, would be much as it is to-night——!

ARTHUR.

[*Distractedly.*] You'll let me see you, talk to you, to-morrow, Rose?

ROSE.

No, never!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Sharply.*] You mean that?

ROSE.

[*Facing him.*] Oh, don't be afraid. I give you my word.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Gripping her hand.*] Thank ye. Thank ye.

TOM.

[*Quietly to* ARTHUR.] Mr. Gower, come and see *me* to-morrow—— [*He moves away to the door.*

ROSE.

[*Turning to* AVONIA, GADD, *and* COLPOYS.] I'm ready——

MISS GOWER.

[*Coming from behind the screen to the back of the couch.*] Not to-night, child! not to-night! where will you go?

AVONIA.

[*Holding* ROSE.] To her old quarters in Brydon Crescent. Send her things after her, if you please.

MISS GOWER.

And then——?

ROSE.

Then back to the "Wells" again, Miss Gower! back to the "Wells"——!

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

THE THIRD ACT.

The scene represents an apartment on the second floor of MRS. MOSSOP'S *house. The room is of a humbler character than that shown in the First Act; but, though shabby, it is neat. On the right is a door, outside which is supposed to be the landing. In the wall at the back is another door, presumably admitting to a further chamber. On the left there is a fireplace, with a fire burning, and over the mantelpiece a mirror. In the left-hand corner of the room is a small bedstead with a tidily-made bed, which can be hidden by a pair of curtains of some common and faded material, hanging from a cord slung from wall to wall. At the foot of the bedstead stands a large theatrical dress-basket. On the wall, by the head of the bed, are some pegs upon which hang a skirt or two and other articles of attire. On the right, against the back wall, there is a chest of drawers, the top of which is used as a washstand. In front of this is a small screen, and close by there are some more pegs with things hanging upon them. On the right wall, above the sofa, is a hanging bookcase with a few books. A small circular table, with a somewhat shabby cover upon it, stands near the fireplace. The walls are papered, the doors painted stone-colour. An old felt carpet is on the floor. The light is that of morning.*

[MRS. MOSSOP, *now dressed in a workaday gown, has just finished making the bed. There is a knock at the centre door.*

AVONIA.

[*From the adjoining room.*] Rose!

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Giving a final touch to the quilt.*] Eh?

AVONIA.

Is Miss Trelawny in her room?

MRS. MOSSOP.

No, Mrs. Gadd; she's at rehearsal.

AVONIA.

Oh——

[MRS. MOSSOP *draws the curtains, hiding the bed from view.* AVONIA *enters by the door on the right in a morning wrapper which has seen its best days. She carries a pair of curling-tongs, and her hair is evidently in process of being dressed in ringlets.*

AVONIA.

Of course she is; I forgot. There's a call for *The Pedlar of Marseilles.* Thank Gawd, *I'm* not in it. [*Singing.*] "I'm a great guerilla chief, I'm a robber and a thief, I can either kill a foe or prig a pocket-handkerchief——"

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Dusting the ornaments on the mantelpiece.*] Bless your heart, you're very gay this morning!

AVONIA.

It's the pantomime. I'm always stark mad as the pantomime approaches. I don't grudge letting the rest of the company have their fling at other times—but with the panto comes *my* turn. [*Throwing herself full length upon the sofa gleefully.*] Ha, ha, ha! the turn of Avonia Bunn! [*With a change of tone.*] I hope Miss Trelawny won't take a walk up to Highbury, or anywhere, after rehearsal. I want to borrow her gilt belt. My dress has arrived.

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Much interested.*] No! has it?

AVONIA.

Yes, Mrs. Burroughs is coming down from the theatre at twelve-thirty to see me in it. [*Singing.*] "Any kind of villainy cometh natural to me, So it endeth with a combat and a one, two, three——!" *

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Surveying the room.*] Well, that's as cheerful as I can make things look, poor dear!

*These snatches of song are from *The Miller and His Men*, a burlesque mealy-drama, by Francis Talfourd and Henry J. Byron, produced at the Strand Theatre, April 9, 1860.

AVONIA.

[*Taking a look round, seriously.*] It's pretty bright —if it wasn't for the idea of Rose Trelawny having to economize!

MRS. MOSSOP.

Ah—h!

AVONIA.

[*Rising.*] That's what I can't swallow. [*Sticking her irons in the fire angrily.*] One room! and on the second floor! [*Turning to* MRS. MOSSOP.] Of course, Gadd and me are one-room people too—and on the same floor; but then Gadd is so popular *out* of the theatre, Mrs. Mossop—he's obliged to spend such a load of money at the "Clown"——

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Who has been dusting the bookcase, coming to the table.*] Mrs. Gadd, dearie, I'm sure I'm not in the least inquisitive; no one could accuse me of it—but I should like to know just one thing.

AVONIA.

[*Testing her irons upon a sheet of paper which she takes from the table.*] What's that?

MRS. MOSSOP.

Why *have* they been and cut down Miss Trelawny's salary at the "Wells"?

AVONIA.

[*Hesitatingly.*] H'm, everybody's chattering about it; you could get to hear easily enough——

MRS. MOSSOP.

Oh, I dare say.

AVONIA.

So I don't mind. Poor Rose! they tell her she can't act now, Mrs. Mossop.

MRS. MOSSOP.

Can't act!

AVONIA.

No, dear old girl, she's lost it; it's gone from her—the trick of it——

[TOM *enters by the door on the right, carrying a table-cover of a bright pattern.*

TOM.

[*Coming upon* MRS. MOSSOP, *disconcerted.*] Oh——!

MRS. MOSSOP.

My first-floor table-cover!

TOM.

Y—y—yes. [*Exchanging the table-covers.*] I thought, as the Telfers have departed, and as their late sitting room is at present vacant, that Miss Trelawny might enjoy the benefit—hey?

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Snatching up the old table-cover.*] Well, I never——! [*She goes out.*

AVONIA.

[*Curling her hair, at the mirror over the mantelpiece.*] I say, Tom, I wonder if I've done wrong——

TOM.

It all depends upon whether you've had the chance.

AVONIA.

I've told Mrs. Mossop the reason they've reduced Rose's salary.

TOM.

You needn't.

AVONIA.

She had only to ask any other member of the company——

TOM.

To have found one who could have kept silent!

AVONIA.

[*Remorsefully.*] Oh, I could burn myself!

TOM.

Besides, it isn't true.

AVONIA.

What——?

TOM.

That Rose Trelawny is no longer up to her work.

AVONIA.

[*Sadly.*] Oh, Tom!

TOM.

It isn't the fact, I say!

AVONIA.

Isn't it the fact that ever since Rose returned from Cavendish Square——?

TOM.

She has been reserved, subdued, ladylike——

AVONIA.

[*Shrilly.*] She was always ladylike!

TOM.

I'm aware of that!

AVONIA.

Well, then, what do you mean by——?

TOM.

[*In a rage, turning away.*] Oh——!

AVONIA.

[*Heating her irons again.*] The idea!

TOM.

[*Cooling down.*] She was always a ladylike *actress*, on the stage and off it, but now she has developed into a—[*at a loss*] into a——

AVONIA.

[*Scornfully.*] Ha!

TOM.

Into a ladylike human being. These fools at the "Wells"! Can't act, can't she! No, she can no longer *spout*, she can no longer *ladle*, the vapid trash, the—the—the turgid rodomontade——

AVONIA.

[*Doubtfully.*] You'd better be careful of your language, Wrench.

TOM.

[*With a twinkle in his eye—mopping his brow.*] You're a married woman, 'Vonia——

AVONIA.

[*Holding her irons to her cheek, modestly.*] I know, but still——

TOM.

Yes, deep down in the well of that girl's nature there has been lying a little, bright, clear pool of genuine refinement, girlish simplicity. And now the bucket has been lowered by love; experience has

turned the handle; and up comes the crystal to the top, pure and sparkling. Why, her broken engagement to poor young Gower has really been the making of her! It has transformed her! Can't act, can't she! [*Drawing a long breath.*] How she would play Dora in my comedy!

AVONIA.

Ho, that comedy!

TOM.

How she would murmur those love-scenes!

AVONIA.

Murder——!

TOM.

[*Testily.*] Murmur. [*Partly to himself.*] Do you know, 'Vonia, I had Rose in my mind when I imagined Dora——?

AVONIA.

Ha, ha! you astonish me.

TOM.

[*Sitting.*] And Arthur Gower when I wrote the character of Gerald, Dora's lover. [*In a low voice.*] Gerald and Dora—Rose and Arthur—Gerald and Dora. [*Suddenly.*] 'Vonia——!

AVONIA.

[*Singeing her hair.*] Ah—! oh, lor'! what now?

TOM.

I wish you could keep a secret.

AVONIA.

Why, can't I?

TOM.

Haven't you just been gossiping with Mother Mossop?

AVONIA.

[*Behind his chair, breathlessly, her eyes bolting.*] A secret, Tom?

TOM.

[*Nodding.*] I should like to share it with you, because—you are fond of her too——

AVONIA.

Ah——!

TOM.

And because the possession of it is worrying me. But there, I can't trust you.

AVONIA.

Mr. Wrench!

TOM.

No, you're a warm-hearted woman, 'Vonia, but you're a sieve.

AVONIA.

[*Going down upon her knees beside him.*] I swear! By all my hopes, Tom Wrench, of hitting

'em as Prince Charming in the coming pantomime, I swear I will not divulge, leave alone tell a living soul, any secret you may intrust to me, or let me know of, concerning Rose Trelawny of the "Wells." Amen!

TOM.

[*In her ear.*] 'Vonia, *I know where Arthur Dower is.*

AVONIA.

Is! isn't he still in London?

TOM.

[*Producing a letter mysteriously.*] No. When Rose stuck to her refusal to see him—listen—mind, not a word——!

AVONIA.

By all my hopes——!

TOM.

[*Checking her*]. All right, all right! [*Reading*] "Theatre Royal, Bristol. Friday——"

AVONIA.

Theatre Royal, Br——!

TOM.

Be quiet! [*Reading.*] "My dear Mr. Wrench. A whole week, and not a line from you to tell me how Miss Trelawny is. When you are silent I am sleepless at night and a haggard wretch during the

day. Young Mr. Kirby, our Walking Gentleman, has been unwell, and the management has given me temporarily some of his business to play——"

AVONIA.

Arthur Gower——!

TOM.

Will you——? [*Reading.*] "Last night I was allowed to appear as Careless in *The School for Scandal.* Miss Mason, the Lady Teazle, complimented me, but the men said I lacked vigour"—the old cry!—"and so this morning I am greatly depressed. But I will still persevere, as long as you can assure me that no presuming fellow is paying attention to Miss Trelawny. Oh, how badly she treated me——!"

AVONIA.

[*Following the reading of the letter.*] "How badly she treated me——!"

TOM.

"I will never forgive her—only love her——"

AVONIA.

"Only love her——"

TOM.

"Only love her, and hope I may some day become a great actor, and, like herself, a gipsy. Yours very gratefully, Arthur Gordon."

AVONIA.

In the Profession!

TOM.

Bolted from Cavendish Square—went down to Bristol——

AVONIA.

How did he manage it all? [TOM *taps his breast proudly.*] But isn't Rose to be told? why shouldn't she be told?

TOM.

She has hurt the boy, stung him to the quick, and he's proud.

AVONIA.

But she loves him now that she believes he has forgotten her. She only half loved him before. She loves him!

TOM.

Serve her right.

AVONIA.

Oh, Tom, is she never to know?

TOM.

[*Folding the letter carefully.*] Some day, when he begins to make strides.

AVONIA.

Strides! he's nothing but General Utility at present?

TOM.

[*Putting the letter in his pocket.*] No.

AVONIA.

And how long have you been that?

TOM.

Ten years.

AVONIA.

[*With a little screech.*] Ah—h—h! she ought to be told!

TOM.

[*Seizing her wrist.*] Woman, you won't——!

AVONIA.

[*Raising her disengaged hand.*] By all my hopes of hitting 'em——!

TOM.

All right, I believe you. [*Listening.*] Sssh!

[*They rise and separate, he moving to the fire, she to the right, as* ROSE *enters.* ROSE *is now a grave, dignified, somewhat dreamy young woman.*

ROSE.

[*Looking from* TOM *to* AVONIA.] Ah——?

TOM AND AVONIA.

Good-morning.

ROSE.

[*Kissing* AVONIA.] Visitors!

AVONIA.

My fire's so black [*showing her irons*]; I thought you wouldn't mind——

ROSE.

[*Removing her gloves.*] Of course not. [*Seeing the table-cover.*] Oh——!

TOM.

Mrs. Mossop asked me to bring that upstairs. It was in the Telfers' room, you know, and she fancied——

ROSE.

How good of her! thanks, Tom. [*Taking off her hat and mantle.*] Poor Mr. and Mrs. Telfer! they still wander mournfully about the "Wells"; they can get nothing to do.

[*Carrying her hat and umbrella, she disappears through the curtains.*

TOM.

[*To* AVONIA, *in a whisper, across the room.*] The Telfers——!

AVONIA.

Eh?

TOM.

She's been giving 'em money.

AVONIA.

Yes.

TOM.

Damn!

ROSE.

[*Reappearing.*] What are you saying about me?

AVONIA.

I was wondering whether you'd lend me that belt you bought for Ophelia; to wear during the first two or three weeks of the pantomime——

ROSE.

Certainly, 'Vonia, to wear throughout——

AVONIA.

[*Embracing her.*] No, it's too good; I'd rather fake one for the rest of the time. [*Looking into her face.*] What's the matter?

ROSE.

I will make you a present of the belt, 'Vonia, if you will accept it. I bought it when I came back to the "Wells," thinking everything would go on as before. But—it's of no use; they tell me I cannot act effectively any longer——

TOM.

[*Indignantly.*] Effectively——!

ROSE.

First, as you know, they reduce my salary——

TOM AND AVONIA.

[*With clenched hands.*] Yes!

ROSE.

And now, this morning — [*sitting*] you can guess——

AVONIA.

[*Hoarsely.*] Got your notice?

ROSE.

Yes.

TOM AND AVONIA.

Oh—h—h!

ROSE.

[*After a little pause.*] Poor mother! I hope she doesn't see. [*Overwhelmed,* AVONIA *and* TOM *sit.*] I was running through Blanche, my old part in *The Pedlar of Marseilles,* when Mr. Burroughs spoke to me. It is true I was doing it tamely, but—it is such nonsense.

TOM.

Hear, hear!

ROSE.

And then, that poor little song I used to sing on the bridge——

AVONIA.

[*Singing, softly.*] "Ever of thee I'm fondly dreaming——"

TOM AND AVONIA.

[*Singing.*] "Thy gentle voice my spirit can cheer."

ROSE.

I told Mr. Burroughs I should cut it out. So ridiculously inappropriate!

TOM.

And that—did it?

ROSE.

[*Smiling at him.*] That did it.

AVONIA.

[*Kneeling beside her, and embracing her tearfully.*] My ducky! oh, but there are other theatres besides the "Wells"——

ROSE.

For me? only where the same trash is acted.

AVONIA.

[*With a sob.*] But a few months ago you l—l—liked your work.

ROSE.

Yes, [*dreamily*] and then I went to Cavendish Square, engaged to Arthur—— [TOM *rises and leans upon the mantelpiece, looking into the fire.*] How badly I behaved in Cavendish Square! how unlike a young lady! What if the old folks *were* overbearing and tyrannical, Arthur could be gentle with them. "They have not many more years in this world," he said—dear boy!—"and anything we can do to make them happy——" And what *did* I do? *There* was a chance for me—to be patient, and womanly; and I proved to them that I was nothing but—an actress.

AVONIA.

[*Rising, hurt but still tearful.*] It doesn't f[illegible], because one is a——

ROSE.

[*Rising.*] Yes, 'Vonia, it does! We are only dolls, partly human, with mechanical limbs that *will* fall into stagey postures, and heads stuffed with sayings out of rubbishy plays. It isn't *the* world we live in, merely *a* world—such a queer little one! I was less than a month in Cavendish Square, and very few people came there; but they were *real* people—*real!* For a month I lost the smell of gas and oranges, and the hurry and noise, and the dirt and the slang, and the clownish joking, at the "Wells." I didn't realize at the time the change that was going on in me; I didn't realize it till I came back. And

then, by degrees, I discovered what had happened—— [TOM *is now near her. She takes his hand and drops her head upon* AVONIA'S *shoulder. Wearily.*] Oh, Tom! oh, 'Vonia——! [*From the next room comes the sound of the throwing about of heavy objects, and of* GADD'S *voice uttering loud imprecations. Alarmed.*] Oh——!

AVONIA.

[*Listening attentively.*] Sounds like Ferdy. [*She goes to the centre door. At the keyhole.*] Ferdy! ain't you well, darling?

GADD.

[*On the other side of the door.*] Avonia!

AVONIA.

. . . in Miss Trelawny's room.

GADD.

Ah——?

AVONIA.

[*To* ROSE *and* TOM.] Now, what's put Ferdy out? [GADD *enters with a wild look.*] Ferdinand!

TOM.

Anything wrong, Gadd?

GADD.

Wrong! wrong! [*Sitting.*] What d'ye think?

AVONIA.

Tell us!

GADD.

I have been asked to appear in the pantomime.

AVONIA.

[*Shocked.*] Oh, Ferdy! you!

GADD.

I, a serious actor, if ever there was one; a poetic actor——!

AVONIA.

What part, Ferdy?

GADD.

The insult, the bitter insult! the gross indignity!

AVONIA.

What part, Ferdy?

GADD.

I have not been seen in pantomime for years, not since I shook the dust of the T. R. Stockton from my feet.

AVONIA.

Ferdy, what part?

GADD.

I simply looked at Burroughs, when he preferred his request, and swept from the theatre.

AVONIA.

What part, Ferdy?

GADD.

A part, too, which is seen for a moment at the opening of the pantomime, and not again till its close.

AVONIA.

Ferdy.

GADD.

Eh?

AVONIA.

What part?

GADD.

A character called the Demon of Discontent.

[ROSE *turns away to the fireplace;* TOM *curls himself up on the sofa and is seen to shake with laughter.*

AVONIA.

[*Walking about indignantly.*] Oh! [*Returning to* GADD.] Oh, it's a rotten part! Rose, dear, I assure you, as artist to artist, that part is absolutely rotten. [*To* GADD.] You won't play it, darling?

GADD.

[*Rising.*] Play it! I would see the "Wells" in ashes first.

AVONIA.

We shall lose our engagements, Ferdy. I know Burroughs; we shall be out, both of us.

GADD.

Of course we shall. D'ye think I have not counted the cost?

AVONIA.

[*Putting her hand in his.*] I don't mind, dear—for the sake of your position—[*struck by a sudden thought*] oh——!

GADD.

What——?

AVONIA.

There now—we haven't put by!

[*There is a knock at the door.*

ROSE.

Who is that?

COLPOYS.

[*Outside the door.*] Is Gadd here, Miss Trelawny?

ROSE.

Yes.

COLPOYS.

I want to see him.

GADD.

Wrench, I'll trouble you. Ask Mr. Colpoys whether he approaches me as a friend, an acquaintance, or in his capacity of stage manager at the "Wells"—the tool of Burroughs.

[TOM *opens the door slightly.* GADD *and* AVONIA *join* ROSE *at the fireplace.*

TOM.

[*At the door, solemnly.*] Colpoys, are you here as Gadd's bosom friend, or as a mere tool of Burroughs?

[*An inaudible colloquy follows between* TOM *and* COLPOYS. TOM'S *head is outside the door; his legs are seen to move convulsively, and the sound of suppressed laughter is heard.*

GADD.

[*Turning.*] Well, well?

TOM.

[*Closing the door sharply, and facing* GADD *with great seriousness.*] He is here as the tool of Burroughs.

GADD.

I will receive him.

[TOM *admits* COLPOYS, *who carries a mean-looking "part," and a letter.*

COLPOYS.

[*After formally bowing to the ladies.*] Oh, Gadd, Mr. Burroughs instructs me to offer you this part in the pantomime. [*Handing the part to* GADD.] Demon of Discontent.

[GADD *takes the part and flings it to the ground;* AVONIA *picks it up and reads it.*

COLPOYS.

You refuse it?

GADD.

I do. [*With dignity.*] Acquaint Mr. Burroughs with my decision, and add that I hope his pantomime will prove an utterly mirthless one. May Boxing-night, to those unfortunate enough to find themselves in the theatre, long remain a dismal memory; and may succeeding audiences, scanty and dissatisfied——! [COLPOYS *presents* GADD *with the letter.* GADD *opens it and reads.*] I leave. [*Sitting.*] The Romeo, the Orlando, the Clifford—leaves!

AVONIA.

[*Coming to* GADD, *indicating some lines in the part.*] Ferdy, this ain't so bad. [*Reading.*]

"I'm Discontent! from Orkney's isle to Dover
To make men's bile bile-over I endover——"

GADD.

'Vonia! [*Taking the part from* AVONIA, *with*

mingled surprise and pleasure.] Ho, ho! no, that's not bad. [*Reading.*]

"Tempers, though sweet, I whip up to a lather,
Make wives hate husbands, sons wish fathers farther."

'Vonia, there's is something to lay hold of here! I'll think this over. [*Rising, addressing* COLPOYS.] Gus, I have thought this over. I play it.

[*They all gather round him, and congratulate him.* AVONIA *embraces and kisses him.*

TOM AND COLPOYS.

That's right!

ROSE.

I'm very pleased, Ferdinand.

AVONIA.

[*Tearfully.*] Oh, Ferdy!

GADD.

[*In high spirits.*] Egad, I play it! Gus, I'll stroll back with you to the "Wells." [*Shaking hands with* ROSE.] Miss Trelawny——! [AVONIA *accompanies* COLPOYS *and* GADD *to the door, clinging to* GADD, *who is flourishing the part.*] 'Vonia, I see myself in this! [*Kissing her.*] Steak for dinner!

[GADD *and* COLPOYS *go out.* TOM *shrieks with laughter.*

AVONIA.

[*Turning upon him, angrily and volubly.*] Yes, I heard you with Colpoys outside that door, if Gadd didn't. It's a pity, Mr. Wrench, you can't find something better to do——!

ROSE.

[*Pacifically.*] Hush, hush, 'Vonia! Tom, assist me with my basket; I'll give 'Vonia her belt——

[TOM *and* ROSE *go behind the curtains and presently emerge, carrying the dress-basket, which they deposit near the sofa.*

AVONIA.

[*Flouncing across the room.*] Making fun of Gadd! an artist to the roots of his hair! There's more talent in Gadd's little finger——!

ROSE.

[*Rummaging among the contents of the basket.*] 'Vonia, 'Vonia!

AVONIA.

And if Gadd *is* to play a demon in the pantomime, what do *you* figure as, Tom Wrench, among half-a-dozen other things? Why, as part of a dragon! Yes, and *which end*——?

ROSE.

[*Quietly to* TOM.] Apologize to 'Vonia at once, Tom.

TOM.

[*Meekly.*] Mrs. Gadd, I beg your pardon.

AVONIA.

[*Coming to him and kissing him.*] Granted, Tom; but you should be a little more considerate——

ROSE.

[*Holding up the belt.*] Here——!

AVONIA.

[*Taking the belt, ecstatically.*] Oh, isn't it lovely! Rose, you dear! you sweet thing! [*Singing a few bars of the Jewel song from Faust, then rushing at* ROSE *and embracing her.*] I'm going to try my dress on, to show Mrs. Burroughs. Come and help me into it. I'll unlock my door on my side—— [TOM *politely opens the door for her to pass out.*] Thank you, Tom—[*kissing him again*] only you should be more considerate toward Gadd——

[*She disappears.*

TOM.

[*Calling after her.*] I will be; I will—[*Shutting the door.*] Ha, ha, ha!

ROSE.

[*Smiling.*] Hush! poor 'Vonia! [*Mending the fire.*] Excuse me, Tom—have you a fire upstairs, in your room, to-day?

TOM.

Er—n—not to-day—it's Saturday. I never have a fire on a Saturday.

ROSE.

[*Coming to him.*] Why not?

TOM.

[*Looking away from her.*] Don't know—creatures of habit——

ROSE.

[*Gently touching his coat-sleeve.*] Because if you would like to smoke your pipe by my fire while I'm with 'Vonia——

[*The key is heard to turn in the lock of the door of the further room.*

AVONIA.

[*From the further room.*] It's unlocked.

ROSE.

I'm coming.

[*She unbolts the door on her side, and goes into* AVONIA'S *room, shutting the door behind her. The lid of the dress-basket is open, showing the contents; a pair of little satin shoes lie at the top.* TOM *takes up one of the shoes and presses it to his lips. There is a knock at the door on the right. He returns the shoe to the basket, closes the lid, and walks away.*

TOM.

Yes?

[*The door opens slightly and* IMOGEN *is heard.*

IMOGEN.

[*Outside.*] Is that you, Wrench?

TOM.

Hullo!

[IMOGEN, *in out-of-door costume, enters breathlessly.*

IMOGEN.

[*Closing the door—speaking rapidly and excitedly.*] Mossop said you were in Rose's room——

TOM.

[*Shaking hands with her.*] She'll be here in a few minutes.

IMOGEN.

It's you I want. Let me sit down.

TOM.

[*Going to the armchair.*] Here——

IMOGEN.

[*Sitting on the right of the table, panting.*] Not near the fire——

TOM.

What's up?

IMOGEN.

Oh, Wrench! p'r'aps my fortune's made!

TOM.

[*Quite calmly.*] Congratulate you, Jenny.

IMOGEN.

Do be quiet; don't make such a racket. You see, things haven't been going at all satisfactorily at the Olympic lately. There's Miss Puddifant——

TOM.

I know—no lady.

IMOGEN.

How do you know?

TOM.

Guessed.

IMOGEN.

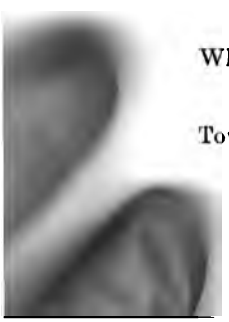
Quite right; and a thousand other annoyances. And at last I took it into my head to consult Mr. Clandon, who married an aunt of mine and lives at Streatham, and he'll lend me five hundred pounds.

TOM.

What for?

IMOGEN.

Towards taking a theatre.



TOM.

[*Dubiously.*] Five hundred——

IMOGEN.

It's all he's good for, and he won't advance that unless I can get a further five, or eight, hundred from some other quarter.

TOM.

What theatre!

IMOGEN.

The Pantheon happens to be empty.

TOM.

Yes; it's been that for the last twenty years.

IMOGEN.

Don't throw wet blankets--I mean—[*referring to her tablets, which she carries in her muff*] I've got it all worked out in black and white. There's a deposit required on account of rent—two hundred pounds. Cleaning the theatre—[*looking at* TOM] what do *you* say?

TOM.

Cleaning *that* theatre?

IMOGEN.

I say, another two hundred.

TOM.

That would remove the top-layer——

IMOGEN.

Cost of producing the opening play, five hundred pounds. Balance for emergencies, three hundred. You generally have a balance for emergencies.

TOM.

You generally have the emergencies, if not the balance!

IMOGEN.

Now, the question is, will five hundred produce the play?

TOM.

What play?

IMOGEN.

Your play.

TOM.

(*Wearily.*) My——

IMOGEN.

Your comedy.

TOM.

[*Turning to the fire—in a low voice.*] Rubbish!

IMOGEN.

Well, Mr. Clandon thinks it *isn't*. [*He faces her sharply.*] I gave it to him to read, and he—well, he's quite taken with it.

TOM.

[*Walking about, his hands in his pockets, his head down, agitatedly.*] Clandon—Landon—what's his name——?

IMOGEN.

Tony Clandon—Anthony Clandon——

TOM.

[*Choking.*] He's a—he's a——

IMOGEN.

He's a hop-merchant.

TOM.

No, he's not—[*sitting on the sofa, leaning his head on his hands*] he's a stunner.

IMOGEN.

[*Rising.*] So you grasp the position. Theatre—manageress—author—play, found; and eight hundred pounds *wanted!*

TOM.

[*Rising.*] Oh, lord!

IMOGEN.

Who's got it?

TOM.

[*Wildly.*] The Queen's got it! Miss Burdett-Coutts has got it!

IMOGEN.

Don't be a fool, Wrench. Do you remember old Mr. Morfew, of Duncan Terrace? He used to take great interest in us all at the "Wells." *He* has money.

TOM.

He has gout; we don't see him now.

IMOGEN.

Gout! How lucky! That means he's at home. Will you run round to Duncan Terrace——?

TOM.

[*Looking down at his clothes.*] I!

IMOGEN.

Nonsense, Wrench; we're not asking him to advance money on your clothes.

TOM.

The clothes are the man, Jenny.

IMOGEN.

And the woman——?

TOM.

The face is the woman; there's the real inequality of the sexes.

IMOGEN.

I'll go! Is my face good enough?

TOM.

[*Enthusiastically.*] I should say so!

IMOGEN.

[*Taking his hands.*] Ha, ha! It has been in my possession longer than you have had your oldest coat, Tom!

TOM.

Make haste, Jenny!

IMOGEN.

[*Running up to the door.*] Oh, it will last till I get to Duncan Terrace. [*Turning.*] Tom, you may have to read your play to Mr. Morfew. Have you another copy? Uncle Clandon has mine.

TOM.

[*Holding his head.*] I think I have—I don't know——

IMOGEN.

Look for it! Find it! If Morfew wants to hear it, we must strike while the iron's hot.

TOM.

While the gold's hot!

IMOGEN AND TOM.

Ha, ha, ha!

[MRS. MOSSOP *enters, showing some signs of excitement.*

IMOGEN.

[*Pushing her aside.*] Oh, get out of the way, Mrs. Mossop—— [IMOGEN *departs.*

MRS. MOSSOP.

Upon my——! [*To* TOM.] A visitor for Miss Trelawny! Where's Miss Trelawny?

TOM.

With Mrs. Gadd. Mossop!

MRS. MOSSOP.

Don't bother me now——

TOM.

Mossop! The apartments vacated by the Telfers! Dare to let 'em without giving me the preference.

MRS. MOSSOP.

You!

TOM.

[*Seizing her hands and swinging her round.*] I may be wealthy, sweet Rebecca! [*Embracing her.*] I may be rich and honoured!

MRS. MOSSOP.

Oh, have done! [*Releasing herself.*] My lodgers do take such liberties——

TOM.

[*At the door, grandly.*] Beccy, half a scuttle of coal, to start with.

[*He goes out, leaving the door slightly open.*

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Knocking at the door of the further room.*] Miss Trelawny, my dear! Miss Trelawny!

[*The door opens, a few inches.*

ROSE.

[*Looking out.*] Why, what a clatter you and Mr. Wrench have been making——!

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*Beckoning her mysteriously.*] Come here, dear.

ROSE.

[*Closing the door and entering the room wonderingly.*] Eh?

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*In awe.*] Sir William Gower!

ROSE.

Sir William!

MRS. MOSSOP.

Don't be vexed with me. "I'll see if she's at home," I said. "Oh, yes, woman, Miss Trelawny's

at home," said he, and hobbled straight in. I've shut him in the Telfers' room——

[*There are three distinct raps, with a stick, at the right-hand door.*

ROSE AND MRS. MOSSOP.

Oh—h!

ROSE.

[*Faintly.*] Open it.

[MRS. MOSSOP *opens the door, and* SIR WILLIAM *enters. He is feebler, more decrepit, than when last seen. He wears a plaid about his shoulders and walks with the aid of a stick.*

MRS. MOSSOP.

[*At the door.*] Ah, and a sweet thing Miss Trelawny is——!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Turning to her.*] Are you a relative?

MRS. MOSSOP.

No, I am *not* a relative——!

SIR WILLIAM.

Go. [*She departs; he closes the door with the end of his stick. Facing* ROSE.] My mind is not commonly a wavering one, Miss Trelawny, but it has taken me some time—months—to decide upon calling on ye.

ROSE.

Won't you sit down?

SIR WILLIAM.

[*After a pause of hesitation, sitting upon the dress-basket.*] Ugh!

ROSE.

[*With quiet dignity.*] Have we no chairs? Do we lack chairs here, Sir William?

[*He gives her a quick, keen look, then rises and walks to the fire.*

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Suddenly, bringing his stick down upon the table with violence.*] My grandson! my grandson! where is he?

ROSE.

Arthur——!

SIR WILLIAM.

I had but one.

ROSE.

Isn't he—in Cavendish Square——?

SIR WILLIAM.

Isn't he in Cavendish Square! no, he is not in Cavendish Square, as you know well.

ROSE.

Oh, I don't know——

SIR WILLIAM.

Tsch!

ROSE.

When did he leave you?

SIR WILLIAM.

Tsch!

ROSE.

When?

SIR WILLIAM.

He made his escape during the night, 22d of August last—[*pointing his finger at her*] as you know well.

ROSE.

Sir William, I assure you——

SIR WILLIAM.

Tsch! [*Taking off his gloves.*] How often does he write to ye?

ROSE.

He does not write to me. He did write day after day, two or three times a day, for about a week. That was in June, when I came back here. [*With drooping head.*] He never writes now.

SIR WILLIAM.

Visits ye——?

ROSE.

No.

SIR WILLIAM.

Comes troubadouring——?

ROSE.

No, no, no. I have not seen him since that night. I refused to see him—— [*With a catch in her breath.*] Why, he may be——!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Fumbling in his pocket.*] Ah, but he's not. He's alive; [*producing a small packet of letters*] Arthur's alive, [*advancing to her*] and full of his tricks still. His great-aunt Trafalgar receives a letter from him once a fortnight, posted in London——

ROSE.

[*Holding out her hand for the letters.*] Oh!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Putting them behind his back.*] Hey!

ROSE.

[*Faintly.*] I thought you wished me to read them. [*He yields them to her grudgingly, she taking his hand and bending over it.*] Ah, thank you.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Withdrawing his hand with a look of disrelish.*] What are ye doing, madam? what are ye doing?

[*He sits, producing his snuff-box; she sits, upon the basket, facing him, and opens the packet of letters.*

ROSE.

[*Reading a letter.*] "To reassure you as to my well-being, I cause this to be posted in London by a friend——"

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Pointing a finger at her again, accusingly.*] A friend!

ROSE.

[*Looking up, with simple pride.*] He would never call me *that*. [*Reading.*] "I am in good bodily health, and as contented as a man can be who has lost the woman he loves, and will love till his dying day—" Ah——!

SIR WILLIAM.

Read no more! Return them to me! give them to me, ma'am! [*Rising, she restores the letters, meekly. He peers up into her face.*] What's come to ye? You are not so much of a vixen as you were.

ROSE.

[*Shaking her head.*] No.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Suspiciously.*] Less of the devil——?

ROSE.

Sir William, I am sorry for having been a vixen, and for all my unruly conduct, in Cavendish Square. I humbly beg your, and Miss Gower's, forgiveness.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Taking snuff, uncomfortably.*] Pi—i—i—sh! extraordinary change.

ROSE.

Aren't *you* changed, Sir William, now that you have lost him?

SIR WILLIAM.

I!

ROSE.

Don't you love him now, the more? [*His head droops a little, and his hands wander to the brooch which secures his plaid.*] Let me take your shawl from you. You would catch cold when you go out——

[*He allows her to remove the plaid, protesting during the process.*

SIR WILLIAM.

I'll not trouble ye, ma'am. Much obleeged to ye, but I'll not trouble ye. [*Rising.*] I'll not trouble ye —— [*He walks away to the fireplace. She folds the plaid and lays it upon the sofa. He looks round—speaking in an altered tone.*] My dear, gipsying doesn't seem to be such a good trade with ye, as it used to be by all accounts——

[*The door of the further room opens and* AVONIA *enters boldly, in the dress of a burlesque prince—cotton-velvet shirt, edged with bullion trimming, a cap, white tights, ankle boots, etc.*

AVONIA.

[*Unconsciously.*] How's this, Rose——?

SIR WILLIAM.

Ah—h—h—h!

ROSE.

Oh, go away, 'Vonia!

AVONIA.

Sir Gower! [*To* SIR WILLIAM.] Good-morning.
[*She withdraws.*

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Pacing the room—again very violent.*] Yes! and these are the associates you would have tempted my boy—my grandson—to herd with! [*Flourishing his stick.*] Ah—h—h—h!

ROSE.

[*Sitting upon the basket—weakly.*] That young lady doesn't live in that attire. She is preparing for the pantomime——

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Standing over her.*] And now he's gone; lured away, I suspect, by one of ye—[*pointing to the door of Avonia's room*] by one of these harridans!——
[AVONIA *reappears defiantly.*

AVONIA.

Look here, Sir Gower——

ROSE.

[*Rising.*] Go, 'Vonia!

AVONIA.

[*To* SIR WILLIAM.] We've met before, if you remember, in Cavendish Square——

ROSE.

[*Sitting again, helplessly.*] Oh, Mrs. Gadd——!

SIR WILLIAM.

Mistress! a married lady!

AVONIA.

Yes, I spent some of my honeymoon at your house——

SIR WILLIAM.

What!

AVONIA.

Excuse my dress; it's all in the way of my business. Just one word about Rose.

ROSE.

Please, 'Vonia——!

AVONIA.

[*To* SIR WILLIAM, *who is glaring at her in horror.*] Now, there's nothing to stare at, Sir Gower. If you must look anywhere in particular, look at that poor thing. A nice predicament you've brought her to!

SIR WILLIAM.

Sir—— ! [*Correcting himself.*] Madam !

AVONIA.

You've brought her to beggary, amongst you. You've broken her heart; and, what's worse, you've made her genteel. She can't act, since she left your mansion; she can only mope about the stage with her eyes fixed like a person in a dream—dreaming of him, I suppose, and of what it is to be a lady. And first she's put upon half-salary; and then, to-day, she gets the sack—the entire sack, Sir Gower! So there's nothing left for her but to starve, or to make artificial flowers. Miss Trelawny I'm speaking of! [*Going to* ROSE, *and embracing her.*] Our Rose! our Trelawny! [*To* ROSE, *breaking down.*] Excuse me for interfering, ducky. [*Retiring, in tears.*] Good-day, Sir Gower. [*She goes out.*

SIR WILLIAM.

[*After a pause, to* ROSE.] Is this—the case?

ROSE.

[*Standing, and speaking in a low voice.*] Yes. As you have noticed, fortune has turned against me, rather.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Penitently.*] I—I'm sorry, ma'am. I—I believe ye've kept your word to us concerning Arthur. I—I——

ROSE.

[*Not heeding him, looking before her, dreamily.*] My mother knew how fickle fortune could be to us gipsies. One of the greatest actors that ever lived warned her of that——

SIR WILLIAM.

Miss Gower will also feel extremely—extremely——

ROSE.

Kean once warned mother of that.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*In an altered tone.*] Kean? which Kean?

ROSE.

Edmund Kean. My mother acted with Edmund Kean when she was a girl.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Approaching her slowly, speaking in a queer voice.*] With Kean? with Kean!

ROSE.

Yes.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*At her side, in a whisper.*] My dear, I—*I've* seen Edmund Kean.

ROSE.

Yes?

SIR WILLIAM.

A young man then, I was; quite different from the man I am now—impulsive, excitable. Kean! [*Drawing a deep breath.*] Ah, he was a *splendid* gipsy!

ROSE.

[*Looking down at the dress-basket.*] I've a little fillet in there that my mother wore as Cordelia to Kean's Lear——

SIR WILLIAM.

I may have seen your mother also. I was somewhat different in those days——

ROSE.

[*Kneeling at the basket and opening it.*] And the Order and chain, and the sword, he wore in Richard. He gave them to my father; I've always prized them. [*She drags to the surface a chain with an Order attached to it, and a sword-belt and sword—all very theatrical and tawdry—and a little gold fillet. She hands him the chain.*] That's the Order.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Handling it tenderly.*] Kean! God bless me!

ROSE.

[*Holding up the fillet.*] My poor mother's fillet.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Looking at it.*] I may have seen her. [*Thoughtfully.*] I was a young man then. [*Looking at* ROSE *steadily.*] Put it on, my dear.

[*She goes to the mirror and puts on the fillet.*

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Examining the Order.*] Lord bless us! how he stirred me! how he——!

[*He puts the chain over his shoulders.* ROSE *turns to him.*

ROSE.

[*Advancing to him.*] There!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Looking at her.*] Cordelia! Cordelia—with Kean!

ROSE.

[*Adjusting the chain upon him.*] This should hang so. [*Returning to the basket and taking up the sword-belt and sword.*] Look!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Handling them.*] Kean! [*To her, in a whisper.*] I'll tell ye! I'll tell ye! when I saw him as Richard—I was young and a fool—I'll tell ye—he almost fired me with an ambition to—to—— [*Fumbling with the belt.*] How did he carry this?

ROSE.

[*Fastening the belt, with the sword, round him.*] In this way——

SIR WILLIAM.

Ah! [*He paces the stage, growling and muttering, and walking with a limp and one shoulder hunched. She watches him, seriously.*] Ah! he was a little man too! I remember him! as if it were last night! I remember—— [*Pausing and looking at her fixedly.*] My dear, your prospects in life have been injured by your unhappy acquaintanceship with my grandson.

ROSE.

[*Gazing into the fire.*] Poor Arthur's prospects in life—what of them?

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Testily.*] Tsch, tsch, tsch!

ROSE.

If I knew where he is——!

SIR WILLIAM.

Miss Trelawny, if you cannot act, you cannot earn your living.

ROSE.

How is he earning *his* living?

SIR WILLIAM.

And if you cannot earn your living, you must be provided for.

ROSE.

[*Turning to him.*] Provided for?

SIR WILLIAM.

Miss Gower was kind enough to bring me here in a cab. She and I will discuss plans for making provision for ye while driving home.

ROSE.

[*Advancing to him.*] Oh, I beg you will do no such thing, Sir William.

SIR WILLIAM.

Hey!

ROSE.

I could not accept any help from you or Miss Gower.

SIR WILLIAM.

You must! you shall!

ROSE.

I will not.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Touching the Order and the sword.*] Ah!—yes, I—I'll buy these of ye, my dear——

ROSE.

Oh, no, no! not for hundreds of pounds! please take them off!

[*There is a hurried knocking at the door.*

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Startled.*] Who's that? [*Struggling with the chain and belt.*] Remove these——!

[*The handle is heard to rattle.* SIR WILLIAM *disappears behind the curtains.* IMOGEN *opens the door and looks in.*

IMOGEN.

[*Seeing only* ROSE, *and coming to her and embracing her.*] Rose darling, where is Tom Wrench?

ROSE.

He was here not long since——

IMOGEN.

[*Going to the door and calling, desperately.*] Tom! Tom Wrench! Mr. Wrench!

ROSE.

Is anything amiss?

IMOGEN.

[*Shrilly.*] Tom!

ROSE.

Imogen!

IMOGEN.

[*Returning to* ROSE.] Oh, my dear, forgive my agitation——!

[TOM *enters, buoyantly, flourishing the manuscript of his play.*

TOM.

I've found it! at the bottom of a box—"deeper than did ever plummet sound——"! [*To* IMOGEN.] Eh? what's the matter?

IMOGEN.

Oh, Tom, old Mr. Morfew——!

TOM.

[*Blankly.*] Isn't he willing——?

IMOGEN.

[*With a gesture of despair.*] I don't know. He's dead.

TOM.

No!

IMOGEN.

Three weeks ago. Oh, what a chance he has missed!

[TOM *bangs his manuscript down upon the table savagely.*

ROSE.

What is it, Tom? Imogen, what is it?

IMOGEN.

[*Pacing the room.*] I can think of no one else——

TOM.

Done again!

IMOGEN.

We shall lose it, of course——

ROSE.

Lose what!

TOM.

The opportunity—her opportunity, *my* opportunity, *your* opportunity, Rose.

ROSE.

[*Coming to him.*] *My* opportunity, Tom!

TOM.

[*Pointing to the manuscript.*] My play—my comedy—my youngest born! Jenny has a theatre—could have one—has five hundred towards it, put down by a man who believes in my comedy, God bless him!—the only fellow who has ever believed——!

ROSE.

Oh, Tom! [*turning to* IMOGEN] oh, Imogen!

IMOGEN.

My dear, five hundred! we want another five, at least.

ROSE.

Another five!

IMOGEN.

Or eight.

TOM.

And you are to play the part of Dora. Isn't she, Jenny—I mean, wasn't she?

IMOGEN.

Certainly. Just the sort of simple little Miss you *could* play now, Rose. And we thought that old Mr. Morfew would help us in the speculation. Speculation! it's a dead certainty!

TOM.

Dead certainty? poor Morfew!

IMOGEN.

And here we are, stuck fast——!

TOM.

[*Sitting upon the dress-basket dejectedly.*] And they'll expect me to rehearse that dragon to-morrow with enthusiasm.

ROSE.

[*Putting her arm around his shoulder.*] Never mind, Tom.

TOM.

No, I won't—— [*Taking her hand.*] Oh, Rose——! [*Looking up at her.*] Oh, Dora——!

[SIR WILLIAM, *divested of his theatrical trappings, comes from behind the curtain.*

IMOGEN.

Oh——!

TOM.

[*Rising.*] Eh?

ROSE.

[*Retreating*]. Sir William Gower, Tom——

SIR WILLIAM.

[*To* TOM.] I had no wish to be disturbed, sir, and I withdrew [*bowing to* IMOGEN] when that lady entered the room. I have been a party, it appears, to a consultation upon a matter of business. [*To* TOM.] Do I understand, sir, that you have been defeated in some project which would have served the interests of Miss Trelawny.

TOM.

Y—y—yes, sir.

SIR WILLIAM.

Mr. Wicks——

TOM.

Wrench——

SIR WILLIAM.

Tsch! Sir, it would give me pleasure—it would give my grandson, Mr. Arthur Gower, pleasure—to be able to aid Miss Trelawny at the present moment.

TOM.

S—s—sir William, w—w—would you like to hear my play——?

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Sharply.*] Hey! [*Looking round.*] Ho, ho!

TOM.

My comedy?

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Cunningly.*] So ye think I might be induced to fill the office ye designed for the late Mr.—Mr.——

IMOGEN.

Morfew.

SIR WILLIAM.

Morfew, eh?

TOM.

N—n—no, sir.

SIR WILLIAM.

No! no!

IMOGEN.

[*Shrilly.*] Yes!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*After a short pause, quietly.*] Read your play, sir. [*Pointing to a chair at the table.*] Sit down. [*To* ROSE *and* IMOGEN.] Sit down.

[TOM *goes to the chair indicated.* MISS GOWER'S *voice is heard outside the door.*

MISS GOWER.

[*Outside.*] William! [ROSE *opens the door;* MISS GOWER *enters.*] Oh, William, what has become of you? has anything dreadful happened?

SIR WILLIAM.

Sit down, Trafalgar. This gentleman is about to read a comedy. A cheer! [*Testily.*] Are there no cheers here! [ROSE *brings a chair and places it for* MISS GOWER *beside* SIR WILLIAM'S *chair.*] Sit down.

MISS GOWER.

[*Sitting, bewildered.*] William, is all this—quite——?

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Sitting.*] Yes, Trafalgar, quite in place—quite in place——

[IMOGEN *sits as* COLPOYS *and* GADD *swagger in at the door*, COLPOYS *smoking a pipe*, GADD *a large cigar.*

SIR WILLIAM.

[*To* TOM, *referring to* GADD *and* COLPOYS.] Friends of yours?

TOM.

Yes, Sir William.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*To* GADD *and* COLPOYS.] Sit down. [*Imperatively.*] Sit down and be silent.

[GADD *and* COLPOYS *seat themselves upon the sofa, like men in a dream.* ROSE *sits on the dress-basket.*

AVONIA.

[*Opening her door slightly—in an anxious voice.*] Rose——!

SIR WILLIAM.

Come in, ma'am, come in! [AVONIA—*still in her pantomime dress—enters, coming to* ROSE.] Sit down, ma'am, and be silent!

[AVONIA *sits beside* ROSE, *next to* MISS GOWER.

MISS GOWER.

[*In horror.*] Oh—h—h—h!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Restraining her.*] Quite in place, Trafalgar; quite in place. [*To* TOM.] Now, sir!

TOM.

[*Opening his manuscript and reading.*] "Life, a comedy, by Thomas Wrench——"

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

THE FOURTH ACT.

The scene represents the stage of a theatre, with the proscenium arch and the dark and empty auditorium in the distance. The stage extends a few feet beyond the line of the proscenium, and is terminated by a row of old-fashioned footlights with metal reflectors. In the wall on the left is an open doorway supposed to admit to the Green-room. Right and left of the stage are the "P." and "O. P." and the first and second entrances, with wings running in grooves, according to the old fashion. Against the walls are some "flats." Just below the footlights is a T-light, burning gas, and below this the prompt-table. On the right of the prompt-table is a chair, and on the left another. Against the edge of the proscenium arch is another chair; and nearer, on the right, stands a large throne-chair, with a gilt frame and red velvet seat, now much dilapidated. On the left, in the "second entrance," there are a "property" stool, a table, and a chair, all of a similar style to the throne-chair and in like condition; and in the centre, as if placed there for the purpose of rehearsal, are a small circular table and a chair. On this table is a work-basket containing a ball of wool and a pair of knitting-needles; and

on the prompt-table there is a book. A faded and ragged green baize covers the floor of the stage.

The wings and the flats and borders, suggest by their appearance a theatre fallen somewhat into decay. The light is a dismal one, but it is relieved by a shaft of sunlight entering through a window in the flies on the right.

Mrs. Telfer is seated upon the throne-chair, in an attitude of dejection. Telfer enters from the Green-room.

TELFER.

[*Coming to her.*] Is that you, Violet?

MRS. TELFER.

Is the reading over?

TELFER.

Almost. My part is confined to the latter 'alf of the second act; so being close to the Green-room door, [*with a sigh*] I stole away.

MRS. TELFER.

It affords you no opportunity, James?

TELFER.

[*Shaking his head.*] A mere fragment.

MRS. TELFER.

[*Rising.*] Well, but a few good speeches to a man of your stamp——

TELFER.

Yes, but this is so line-y, Violet; so very line-y. And what d'ye think the character is described as?

MRS. TELFER.

What?

TELFER.

"An old, stagey, out-of-date actor."

[*They stand looking at each other for a moment, silently.*

MRS. TELFER.

[*Falteringly.*] Will you—be able—to get near it, James?

TELFER.

[*Looking away from her.*] I dare say——

MRS. TELFER.

[*Laying a hand upon his shoulder.*] That's all right, then.

TELFER.

And you—what have they called you for, if you're not in the play? They 'ave not dared to suggest understudy?

MRS. TELFER.

[*Playing with her fingers.*] They don't ask me to act at all, James.

TELFER.

Don't ask you——!

MRS. TELFER.

Miss Parrott offers me the position of Wardrobe-mistress.

TELFER.

Violet——!

MRS. TELFER.

Hush!

TELFER.

Let us both go home.

MRS. TELFER.

[*Restraining him.*] No, let us remain. We've been idle six months, and I can't bear to see you without your watch and all your comforts about you.

TELFER.

[*Pointing toward the Green-room.*] And so this new-fangled stuff, and these dandified people, are to push us, and such as us, from our stools!

MRS. TELFER.

Yes, James, just as some other new fashion will, in course of time, push *them* from their stools.

[*From the Green-room comes the sound of a slight clapping of hands, followed by a murmur of voices. The* TELFERS *move away.* IMOGEN, *elaborately dressed, enters from the Green-room and goes leisurely to the prompt-table. She is followed by* TOM, *manuscript in hand, smarter than usual in appearance; and he by* O'DWYER,—*an excitable Irishman of about forty, with an extravagant head of hair—who carries a small bundle of "parts" in brown-paper covers.* TOM *and* O'DWYER *join* IMOGEN.

O'DWYER.

[*To* TOM.] Mr. Wrench, I congratulate ye; I have that honour, sir. Your piece will do, sir; it will take the town, mark me.

TOM.

Thank you, O'Dwyer.

IMOGEN.

Look at the sunshine! there's a good omen, at any rate.

O'DWYER.

Oh, sunshine's nothing. [*To* TOM.] But did ye

observe the gloom on their faces whilst ye were readin'?

IMOGEN.

[*Anxiously.*] Yes, they did look glum.

O'DWYER.

Glum! it might have been a funeral! There's a healthy prognostication for ye, if ye loike! it's infallible.

[*A keen-faced gentleman and a lady enter, from the Green-room, and stroll across the stage to the right, where they lean against the wings and talk. Then two young gentlemen enter, and* ROSE *follows.*

Note.—The actors and the actress appearing for the first time in this act, as members of the Pantheon Company, are outwardly greatly superior to the GADDS, *the* TELFERS, *and* COLPOYS.

ROSE.

[*Shaking hands with* TELFER.] Why didn't you sit near me, Mr. Telfer? [*Going to* MRS. TELFER.] Fancy our being together again, and at the West End! [*To* TELFER.] Do you like the play?

TELFER.

Like it! there's not a speech in it, my dear—not a real *speech;* nothing to dig your teeth into——

O'DWYER.

[*Allotting the parts, under the direction of* TOM *and* IMOGEN.] Mr. Mortimer! [*One of the young gentlemen advances and receives his part from* O'DWYER, *and retires, reading it.*] Mr. Denzil!

[*The keen-faced gentleman takes his part, then joins* IMOGEN *on her left and talks to her. The lady now has something to say to the solitary young gentleman.*

TOM.

[*To* O'DWYER, *quietly, handing him a part.*] Miss Brewster.

O'DWYER.

[*Beckoning to the lady, who does not observe him, her back being towards him.*] Come here, my love.

TOM.

[*To* O'DWYER.] No, no, O'Dwyer—not your "love."

O'DWYER.

[*Perplexed.*] Not?

TOM.

No.

O'DWYER.

No?

TOM.

Why, you are meeting her this morning for the first time.

O'DWYER.

That's true enough. [*Approaching the lady and handing her the part.*] Miss Brewster.

THE LADY.

Much obliged.

O'DWYER.

[*Quietly to her.*] It 'll fit ye like a glove, darlin'.

[*The lady sits, conning her part.* O'DWYER *returns to the table.*

TELFER.

[*To* ROSE.] Your lover in the play? which of these young sparks plays your lover—Harold or Gerald——?

ROSE.

Gerald. I don't know. There are some people not here to-day, I believe.

O'DWYER.

Mr. Hunston!

[*The second young gentleman advances, receives his part, and joins the other young gentleman in the wings.*

ROSE.

Not that young man, I hope. Isn't he a little bandy?

TELFER.

One of the finest Macduffs I ever fought with was bow-legged.

O'DWYER.

Mr. Kelfer.

TOM.

[*To* O'DWYER.] No, no—Telfer.

O'DWYER.

Telfer.

[TELFER *draws himself erect, puts his hand in his breast, but otherwise remains stationary.*

MRS. TELFER.

[*Anxiously.*] That's you, James.

O'DWYER.

Come on, Mr. Telfer! look alive, sir!

TOM.

[*To* O'DWYER.] Sssh, sssh, sssh! don't, don't——! [TELFER *advances to the prompt-table, slowly. He receives his part from* O'DWYER. *To* TELFER, *awkwardly.*] I—I hope the little part of Poggs appeals to you, Mr. Telfer. Only a sketch, of course; but there was nothing else—quite—in your——

TELFER.

Nothing? to whose share does the Earl fall?

TOM.

Oh, Mr. Denzil plays Lord Parracourt.

TELFER.

Denzil? I've never 'eard of 'im. Will you get to me to-day?

TOM.

We—we expect to do so.

TELFER.

Very well. [*Stiffly.*] Let me be called in the street. [*He stalks away.*

MRS. TELFER.

[*Relieved.*] Thank Heaven! I was afraid James would break out.

ROSE.

[*To* MRS. TELFER.] But you, dear Mrs. Telfer—you weren't at the reading—what are *you* cast for?

MRS. TELFER.

I? [*Wiping away a tear.*] I am the Wardrobe-mistress of this theatre.

ROSE.

You! [*Embracing her.*] Oh! oh!

MRS. TELFER.

[*Composing herself.*] Miss Trelawny—Rose—my child, if we are set to scrub a floor—and we may

come to that yet—let us make up our minds to scrub it legitimately—with dignity——

[*She disappears and is seen no more.*

O'DWYER.

Miss Trelawny! come here, my de——

TOM.

[*To* O'DWYER.] Hush!

O'DWYER.

Miss Trelawny!

[ROSE *receives her part from* O'DWYER *and, after a word or two with* TOM *and* IMOGEN, *joins the two young gentlemen who are in the "second entrance" on the left. The lady, who has been seated, now rises and crosses to the left, where she meets the keen-faced gentleman, who has finished his conversation with* IMOGEN.

THE LADY.

[*To the keen-faced gentleman.*] I say, Mr. Denzil! who plays Gerald?

THE GENTLEMEN.

Gerald?

THE LADY.

The man I have my scene with in the third act—the hero——

THE GENTLEMAN.

Oh, yes. Oh, a young gentleman from the country, I understand.

THE LADY.

From the country!

THE GENTLEMAN.

He is coming up by train this morning, Miss Parrott tells me; from Bath or somewhere——

THE LADY.

Well, whoever he is, if he can't play that scene with me decently, my part's not worth rags.

TOM.

[*To* IMOGEN, *who is sitting at the prompt-table.*] Er—h'm—shall we begin, Miss Parrott?

IMOGEN.

Certainly, Mr. Wrench.

TOM.

We'll begin, O'Dwyer.

[*The lady titters at some remark from the keen-faced gentleman.*

O'DWYER.

[*Coming down the stage, violently.*] Clear the

stage there! I'll not have it! Upon my honour, this is the noisiest theatre I've ever set foot in!

[*The wings are cleared, the characters disappearing into the Green-room.*

O'DWYER.

I can't hear myself speak for all the riot and confusion!

TOM.

[*To* O'DWYER.] My dear O'Dwyer, there is *no* riot, there is *no* confusion——

IMOGEN.

[*To* O'DWYER.] Except the riot and confusion *you* are making.

TOM.

You know, you're admirably earnest, O'Dwyer, but a little excitable.

O'DWYER.

[*Calming himself.*] Oh, I beg your pardon, I'm sure. [*Emphatically.*] My system is, begin as you mean to go on.

IMOGEN.

But we *don't* mean to go on like that.

TOM.

Of course not; of course not. Now, let me see—[*pointing to the right centre*] we shall want another chair here.

O'DWYER.

Another chair?

TOM.

A garden chair.

O'DWYER.

[*Excitably.*] Another chair! Now, then, another chair! Properties! where are ye? do ye hear me callin'? must I raise my voice to ye——?

[*He rushes away.*

IMOGEN.

[*To* TOM.] Phew! where did you get *him* from?

TOM.

[*Wiping his brow.*] Known Michael for years—most capable, invaluable fellow——

IMOGEN.

[*Simply.*] I wish he was dead.

TOM.

So do I.

[O'DWYER *returns, carrying a light chair.*

TOM.

Well, where's the property-man?

O'DWYER.

[*Pleasantly.*] It's all right, now. He's gone to dinner.

TOM.

[*Placing the chair in position.*] Ah, then he'll be back some time during the afternoon. [*Looking about him.*] That will do. [*Taking up his manuscript.*] Call—haven't you engaged a call-boy yet, O'Dwyer?

O'DWYER.

I have, sir, and the best in London.

IMOGEN.

Where is he?

O'DWYER.

He has sint an apology for his non-attindance.

IMOGEN.

Oh——!

O'DWYER.

A sad case, ma'am; he's buryin' his wife.

TOM.

Wife!

IMOGEN.

The call-boy?

TOM.

What's his age?

O'DWYER.

Ye see, he happens to be an elder brother of my own——

IMOGEN AND TOM.

Oh, lord!

TOM.

Never mind! let's get on! Call Miss—— [*Looking toward the right.*] Is that the Hall-Keeper?

[*A man, suggesting by his appearance that he is the* Hall-Keeper, *presents himself, with a card in his hand.*

O'DWYER.

[*Furiously.*] Now then! are we to be continually interrupted in this fashion? Have I, or have I not, given strict orders that nobody whatever——?

TOM.

Hush, hush! see whose card it is; give me the card——

O'DWYER.

[*Handing the card to* TOM.] Ah, I'll make rules here. In a week's time you'll not know this for the same theatre——

[TOM *has passed the card to* IMOGEN *without looking at it.*

IMOGEN.

[*Staring at it blankly.*] Oh——!

TOM.

[*To her.*] Eh?

IMOGEN.

Sir William!

TOM.

Sir William!

IMOGEN.

What can he want? what shall we do?

TOM.

[*After referring to his watch—to the* Hall-Keeper.] Bring this gentleman on to the stage. [*The* Hall-Keeper *withdraws. To* O'DWYER.] Make yourself scarce for a few moments, O'Dwyer. Some private business——

O'DWYER.

All right. I've plenty to occupy me. I'll begin to frame those rules—— [*He disappears.*

IMOGEN.

[*To* TOM.] Not here——

TOM.

[*To* IMOGEN.] The boy can't arrive for another twenty minutes. Besides, we must, sooner or later, accept responsibility for our act.

IMOGEN.

[*Leaning upon his arm.*] Heavens! I foretold this!

TOM.

[*Grimly.*] I know—"said so all along"

IMOGEN.

If he should withdraw his capital!

TOM.

[*With clenched hands.*] At least, that would enable me to write a melodrama.

IMOGEN.

Why?

TOM.

I should then understand the motives and the springs of Crime!

[*The* Hall-Keeper *reappears, showing the way to* SIR WILLIAM GOWER. SIR WILLIAM'S *hat is drawn down over his eyes, and the rest of his face is almost entirely concealed by his plaid. The* Hall-Keeper *withdraws.*

TOM.

[*Receiving* SIR WILLIAM.] How d'ye do, Sir William?

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Giving him two fingers—with a grunt.*] Ugh!

TOM.

These are odd surroundings for you to find yourself in. [IMOGEN *comes forward.*] Miss Par rott——

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Advancing to her, giving her two fingers.*] Good-morning, ma'am.

IMOGEN.

This is perfectly delightful.

SIR WILLIAM.

What is?

IMOGEN.

[*Faintly.*] Your visit.

SIR WILLIAM.

Ugh! [*Weakly.*] Give me a cheer. [*Looking about him.*] Have ye no cheers here?

TOM.

Yes.

[TOM *places the throne-chair behind* SIR WILLIAM, *who sinks into it.*

SIR WILLIAM.

Thank ye; much obleeged. [*To* IMOGEN.] Sit. [IMOGEN *hurriedly fetches the stool and seats herself beside the throne-chair.* SIR WILLIAM *produces his snuff-box.*] You are astonished at seeing me here, I dare say?

TOM.

Not at all.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Glancing at* TOM.] Addressing the lady. [*To* IMOGEN.] You are surprised to see me?

IMOGEN.

Very.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*To* TOM.] Ah! [TOM *retreats, getting behind* SIR WILLIAM'S *chair and looking down upon him.*] The truth is, I am beginning to regret my association with ye.

IMOGEN.

[*Her hand to her heart.*] Oh—h—h—h!

TOM.

[*Under his breath.*] Oh! [*Holding his fist over* SIR WILLIAM'S *head.*] Oh—h—h—h!

IMOGEN.

[*Piteously*]. You—you don't propose to withdraw your capital, Sir William?

SIR WILLIAM.

That would be a breach of faith, ma'am——

IMOGEN.

Ah!

TOM.

[*Walking about, jauntily.*] Ha!

IMOGEN.

[*Seizing* SIR WILLIAM'S *hand.*] Friend!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Withdrawing his hand sharply.*] I'll thank ye not to repeat that action, ma'am. But I—I have been slightly indisposed since I made your acqueentance in Clerkenwell; I find myself unable to sleep at night. [*To* TOM.] That comedy of yours—it buzzes continually in my head, sir.

TOM.

It was written with such an intention, Sir William —to buzz in people's heads.

SIR WILLIAM.

Ah, I'll take care ye don't read me another, Mr. Wicks; at any rate, another which contains a character resembling a member of my family—a *late* member of my family. I don't relish being reminded of late members of my family in this way, and being kept awake at night, thinking—turning over in my mind——

IMOGEN.

[*Soothingly.*] Of course not.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Taking snuff.*] Pa—a—a—h! pi—i—i—sh! When I saw Kean, as Richard, he reminded me of no member of my family. Shakespeare knew better than that, Mr. Wicks. [*To* IMOGEN.] And therefore, ma'am, upon receiving your letter last night, acqueenting me with your intention to commence rehearsing your comedy—[*glancing at* TOM] *his* comedy——

IMOGEN.

[*Softly.*] *Our* comedy——

SIR WILLIAM.

Ugh—to-day at noon, I determined to present myself here and request to be allowed to—to——

TOM.

To watch the rehearsal?

SIR WILLIAM.

The rehearsal of those episodes in your comedy which remind me of a member of my family—a *late* member.

IMOGEN.

[*Constrainedly*]. Oh, certainly——

TOM.

[*Firmly.*] By all means.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Rising, assisted by* TOM.] I don't wish to be steered at by any of your—what d'ye call 'em?—your gipsy crew——

TOM.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Company, we call 'em.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Tartly.*] I don't care what ye call 'em. [TOM *restores the throne-chair to its former position.*] Put me into a curtained box, where I can hear, and see, and not be seen; and when I have heard and seen enough, I'll return home—and—and—obtain a little sleep; and to-morrow I shall be well enough to sit in Court again.

TOM.

[*Calling.*] Mr. O'Dwyer——

[O'DWYER *appears;* TOM *speaks a word or two to him, and hands him the manuscript of the play.*

IMOGEN.

[*To* SIR WILLIAM, *falteringly.*] And if you are pleased with what you see this morning, perhaps you will attend another——?

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Angrily.*] Not I. After to-day I wash my hands of ye. What do plays and players do, coming into my

head, disturbing my repose! [*More composedly, to* TOM, *who has returned to his side.*] Your comedy has merit, sir. You call it *Life*. There is a character in it—a young man—not unlike life, not unlike a late member of my family. Obleege me with your arm. [*To* IMOGEN.] Madam, I have arrived at the conclusion that Miss Trelawny belongs to a set of curious people who in other paths might have been useful members of society. But after to-day I've done with ye—done with ye—— [*To* TOM.] My box, sir—my box——

[TOM *leads* SIR WILLIAM *up the stage.*

TOM.

[*To* O'DWYER.] Begin rehearsal. Begin rehearsal! Call Miss Trelawny!

[TOM *and* SIR WILLIAM *disappear.*

O'DWYER.

Miss Trelawny! Miss Trelawny! [*Rushing to the left.*] Miss Trelawny! how long am I to stand here shoutin' myself hoarse——? [ROSE *appears.*

ROSE.

[*Gently.*] Am I called?

O'DWYER.

[*Instantly calm.*] You are, darlin'. [O'DWYER *takes his place at the prompt-table, book in hand.* IMOGEN *and* ROSE *stand together in the centre. The*

other members of the company come from the Green-room and stand in the wings, watching the rehearsal.] Now then! [*Reading from the manuscript.*] "At the opening of the play Peggy and Dora are discovered——" Who's Peggy? [*Excitedly.*] Where's Peggy? Am I to——?

IMOGEN.

Here I am! here I am! I am Peggy.

O'DWYER.

[*Calm.*] Of course ye are, lovey—ma'am, I should say——

IMOGEN.

Yes, you should.

O'DWYER.

"Peggy is seated upon the Right, Dora on the Left——" [ROSE *and* IMOGEN *seat themselves accordingly. In a difficulty.*] No—Peggy on the Left, Dora on the Right. [*Violently.*] This is the worst written scrip I've ever held in my hand—— [ROSE *and* IMOGEN *change places.*] So horribly scrawled over, and interlined, and—no—I was quite correct. Peggy is on the Right, and Dora is on the Left. [IMOGEN *and* ROSE *again change seats.* O'DWYER *reads from the manuscript.*] "Peggy is engaged in —in——" I can't decipher it. A scrip like this is a disgrace to any well-conducted theatre. [*To* IMOGEN.] I don't know what you're doin'. "Dora is—is——"

[*To* ROSE.] You are also doin' something or another. Now then! When the curtain rises, you are discovered, both of ye, employed in the way described—— [TOM *returns.*] Ah, here ye are! [*Resigning the manuscript to* TOM, *and pointing out a passage.*] I've got it smooth as far as there.

TOM.

Thank you.

O'DWYER.

[*Seating himself.*] You're welcome.

TOM.

[*To* ROSE *and* IMOGEN.] Ah, you're not in your right positions. Change places, please.

[IMOGEN *and* ROSE *change seats once more.* O'DWYER *rises and goes away.*

O'DWYER.

[*Out of sight, violently.*] A scrip like that's a scandal! If there's a livin' soul that can read bad handwriting, I am that man! But of all the——!

TOM.

Hush, hush! Mr. O'Dwyer!

O'DWYER.

[*Returning to his chair.*] Here.

TOM.

[*Taking the book from the prompt-table and handing it to* IMOGEN.] You are reading.

O'DWYER.

[*Sotto voce.*] I thought so.

TOM.

[*To* ROSE.] You are working.

O'DWYER.

Working.

TOM.

[*Pointing to the basket on the table.*] There are your needles and wool. [ROSE *takes the wool and the needles out of the basket.* TOM *takes the ball of wool from her and places it in the centre of the stage.*] You have allowed the ball of wool to roll from your lap on to the grass. You will see the reason for that presently.

ROSE.

I remember it, Mr. Wrench.

TOM.

The curtain rises. [*To* IMOGEN.] Miss Parrott——

IMOGEN.

[*Referring to her part.*] What do I say?

TOM.

Nothing—you yawn.

IMOGEN.

[*Yawning, in a perfunctory way.*] Oh—h!

TOM.

As if you meant it, of course.

IMOGEN.

Well, of course.

TOM.

Your yawn must tell the audience that you are a young lady who may be driven by boredom to almost any extreme.

O'DWYER.

[*Jumping up.*] This sort of thing. [*Yawning extravagantly.*] He—oh!

TOM.

[*Irritably.*] Thank you, O'Dwyer; thank you.

O'DWYER.

[*Sitting again.*] You're welcome.

TOM.

[*To* ROSE.] You speak.

ROSE.

[*Reading from her part—retaining the needles and the end of the wool.*] "What are you reading, Miss Chaffinch?"

IMOGEN.

[*Reading from her part.*] "A novel."

ROSE.

"And what is the name of it?"

IMOGEN.

"*The Seasons.*"

ROSE.

"Why is it called that?"

IMOGEN.

"Because all the people in it do seasonable things."

ROSE.

"For instance——?"

IMOGEN.

"In the Spring, fall in love."

ROSE.

"In the Summer?"

IMOGEN.

"Become engaged. Delightful!"

ROSE.

"Autumn?"

IMOGEN.

"Marry. Heavenly!"

ROSE.

"Winter?"

IMOGEN.

"Quarrel. Ha, ha, ha!"

TOM.

[*To* IMOGEN.] Close the book—with a bang——

O'DWYER.

[*Bringing his hands together sharply by way of suggestion.*] Bang!

TOM.

[*Irritably.*] Yes, yes, O'Dwyer. [*To* IMOGEN.] Now rise——

O'DWYER.

Up ye get!

TOM.

And cross to Dora.

IMOGEN.

[*Going to* ROSE.] "Miss Harrington, don't you wish occasionally that you were engaged to be married?"

ROSE.

"No."

IMOGEN.

"Not on wet afternoons?"

ROSE.

"I am perfectly satisfied with this busy little life of mine, as your aunt's Companion."

TOM.

[*To* IMOGEN.] Walk about, discontentedly.

IMOGEN.

[*Walking about.*] "I've nothing to do; let's tell each other our ages."

ROSE.

"I am nineteen."

TOM.

[*To* IMOGEN.] In a loud whisper——

IMOGEN.

"I am twenty-two."

O'DWYER.

[*Rising and going to* TOM.] Now, hadn't ye better make that *six*-and-twenty?

IMOGEN.

[*Joining them, with asperity.*] Why? why?

TOM.

No, no, certainly not. Go on.

IMOGEN.

[*Angrily.*] Not till Mr. O'Dwyer retires into his corner.

TOM.

O'Dwyer—— [O'DWYER *takes his chair, and retires to the "prompt-corner," out of sight, with the air of martyrdom.* TOM *addresses* ROSE.] You speak.

ROSE.

"I shall think, and feel, the same when I am twenty-two, I am sure. I shall never wish to marry."

TOM.

[*To* IMOGEN.] Sit on the stump of the tree.

IMOGEN.

Where's that?

TOM.

[*Pointing to the stool down the stage.*] Where that stool is.

IMOGEN.

[*Sitting on the stool.*] "Miss Harrington, who is Mr. Gerald Leigh who is expected down to-day?"

ROSE.

Lord Parracourt's secretary."

IMOGEN.

"Old and poor!"

ROSE.

"Neither, I believe. He is the son of a college chum of Lord Parracourt's—so I heard his lordship tell Lady McArchie—and is destined for public life."

IMOGEN.

"Then he's young!"

ROSE.

"Extremely, I understand."

IMOGEN.

[*Jumping up, in obedience to a sign from* TOM.] "Oh, how can you be so spiteful!"

ROSE.

"I!"

IMOGEN.

"You mean he's too young!"

ROSE.

"Too young for what?"

IMOGEN.

"Too young for—oh, bother!"

TOM.

[*Looking towards the keen-faced gentleman.*] Mr. Denzil.

O'DWYER.

[*Putting his head round the corner.*] Mr. Denzil!

[*The keen-faced gentleman comes forward, reading his part, and meets* IMOGEN.

THE GENTLEMAN.

[*Speaking in the tones of an old man.*] "Ah, Miss Peggy!"

TOM.

[*To* ROSE.] Rise, Miss Trelawny.

O'DWYER.

[*His head again appearing.*] Rise, darlin'!

[ROSE *rises.*

THE GENTLEMAN.

[*To* IMOGEN.] "Your bravura has just arrived from London. Lady McArchie wishes you to try it over; and if I may add my entreaties——"

IMOGEN.

[*Taking his arm.*] "Delighted, Lord Parracourt. [*To* ROSE.] Miss Harrington, bring your work indoors and hear me squall. [*To the Gentleman.*] Why, you must have telegraphed to town!"

THE GENTLEMAN.

[*As they cross the stage.*] "Yes, but even teleg-

raphy is too sluggish in executing your smallest command."

[IMOGEN *and the keen-faced gentleman go off on the left. He remains in the wings, she returns to the prompt-table.*

ROSE.

"Why do Miss Chaffinch and her girl-friends talk of nothing, think of nothing apparently, but marriage? Ought a woman to make marriage the great object of life? can there be no other? I wonder——"

[*She goes off, the wool trailing after her, and disappears into the Green-room. The ball of wool remains in the centre of the stage.*

TOM.

[*Reading from his manuscript.*] "The piano is heard; and Peggy's voice singing. Gerald enters——"

IMOGEN.

[*Clutching* TOM'S *arm.*] There——!

TOM.

Ah, yes, here is Mr. Gordon.

[ARTHUR *appears, in a travelling coat.* TOM *and* IMOGEN *hasten to him and shake hands with him vigorously.*

TOM.

[*On* ARTHUR'S *right.*] How are you?

IMOGEN.

[*On his left, nervously.*] How are you?

ARTHUR.

[*Breathlessly.*] Miss Parrott! Mr. Wrench! forgive me if I am late; my cab-horse galloped from the station——

TOM.

We have just reached your entrance. Have you read your part over?

ARTHUR.

Read it! [*Taking it from his pocket.*] I know every word of it! it has made my journey from Bristol like a flight through the air! Why, Mr. Wrench [*turning over the leaves of his part*], some of this is almost *me!*

TOM AND IMOGEN.

[*Nervously.*] Ha, ha, ha!

TOM.

Come! you enter! [*pointing to the right*] there! [*returning to the prompt-table with* IMOGEN] you stroll on, looking about you! Now, Mr. Gordon!

ARTHUR.

[*Advancing to the centre of the stage, occasionally glancing at his part.*] "A pretty place. I am glad I left the carriage at the lodge and walked through the grounds."

[*There is an exclamation, proceeding from the auditorium, and the sound of the overturning of a chair.*

IMOGEN.

Oh!

O'DWYER.

[*Appearing, looking into the auditorium.*] What's that? This is the noisiest theatre I've ever set foot in——!

TOM.

Don't heed it! [*To* ARTHUR.] Go on, Mr. Gordon.

ARTHUR.

"Somebody singing. A girl's voice. Lord Parracourt made no mention of anybody but his hostess—the dry, Scotch widow. [*Picking up the ball of wool.*] This is Lady McArchie's, I'll be bound. The very colour suggests spectacles and iron-gray curls——"

TOM.

Dora returns. [*Calling.*] Dora!

O'DWYER.

Dora! where are ye?

THE GENTLEMAN.

[*Going to the Green room door.*] Dora! Dora!

[ROSE *appears in the wings.*

ROSE.

[*To* TOM.] I'm sorry.

TOM.

Go on, please!

[*There is another sound, nearer the stage, of the overturning of some object.*

O'DWYER.

What——?

TOM.

Don't heed it!

ROSE.

[*Coming face to face with* ARTHUR.] Oh——!

ARTHUR.

Rose!

TOM.

Go on, Mr. Gordon!

ARTHUR.

[*To* ROSE, *holding out the ball of wool.*] "I beg your pardon—are you looking for this?"

ROSE.

"Yes, I—I—I—" Oh, Mr. Gower, why are you here?

ARTHUR.

Don't you know?

ROSE.

No.

ARTHUR.

Why, Miss Trelawny, I am trying to be what *you* are——

ROSE.

What I am!

ARTHUR.

Yes—a gipsy.

ROSE.

A gipsy——a gip—— [*Dropping her head upon his breast.*] Oh, Arthur!

[SIR WILLIAM *enters, and comes forward on* ARTHUR'S *right.*

SIR WILLIAM.

Arthur!

ARTHUR.

[*Turning to him.*] Grandfather!

O'DWYER.

[*Indignantly.*] Upon my soul——!

TOM.

Leave the stage, O'Dwyer!

[O'DWYER *vanishes.* IMOGEN *goes to those who are in the wings and talks to them; gradually they withdraw into the Green-room.* ROSE *sinks on to the stool;* TOM *comes to her and stands beside her.*

SIR WILLIAM.

What's this? what is it——?

ARTHUR.

[*Bewildered.*] Sir, I—I—you—and—and Rose—are the last persons I expected to meet here——

SIR WILLIAM.

Ah—h—h—h!

ARTHUR.

Have you not learnt, sir, from Mr. Wrench or Miss Parrott, that I have—become—an actor, sir?

SIR WILLIAM.

Not *I;* [*pointing to* TOM *and* IMOGEN] these—these people have thought it decent to allow me to make the discovery for myself.

[*He sinks into the throne-chair.* TOM *goes to* SIR WILLIAM. ARTHUR *joins* IMOGEN; *they talk together rapidly and earnestly.*

TOM.

[*To* SIR WILLIAM.] Sir William, the secret of your grandson's choice of a profession——

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Scornfully.*] Profession!

TOM.

Was one that I was pledged to keep as long as it was possible to do so. And pray remember that your attendance here this morning is entirely your own act. It was our intention——

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Struggling to his feet.*] Where is the door? the way to the door?

TOM.

And let me beg you to understand this, Sir William—that Miss Trelawny was, till a moment ago, as ignorant as yourself of Mr. Arthur Gower's doings, of his movements, of his whereabouts. She

would never have thrown herself in his way, in this manner. Whatever conspiracy——

SIR WILLIAM.

Conspiracy! the right word—conspiracy!

TOM.

Whatever conspiracy there has been is my own—to bring these two young people together again, to make them happy.

[ROSE *holds out her hand to* TOM; *he takes it. They are joined by* IMOGEN.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Looking about him.*] The door! the door!

ARTHUR.

[*Coming to* SIR WILLIAM.] Grandfather, may I, when rehearsal is over, venture to call in Cavendish Square——?

SIR WILLIAM.

Call——!

ARTHUR.

Just to see aunt Trafalgar, sir? I hope aunt Trafalgar is well, sir.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*With a slight change of tone.*] Your great-aunt Trafalgar? Ugh, yes, I suppose she will consent to see ye——

ARTHUR.

Ah, sir——!

SIR WILLIAM.

But *I* shall be out; *I* shall not be within doors.

ARTHUR.

Then, if aunt Trafalgar will receive me, sir, do you think I may be allowed to—to bring Miss Trelawny with me—— ?

SIR WILLIAM.

What! ha, I perceive you have already acquired the impudence of your vagabond class, sir; the brazen effrontery of a set of——!

ROSE.

[*Rising and facing him.*] Forgive him! forgive him! oh, Sir William, why may not Arthur become, some day, a *splendid* gipsy?

SIR WILLIAM.

Eh?

ROSE.

Like——

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Peering into her face.*] Like——?

ROSE.

Like——

TOM.

Yes, sir, a gipsy, though of a different order from the old order which is departing—a gipsy of the new school!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*To* ROSE.] Well, Miss Gower is a weak, foolish lady; for aught I know she may allow this young man to—to—take ye——

IMOGEN.

I would accompany Rose, of course, Sir William.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Tartly.*] Thank ye, ma'am. [*Turning.*] I'll go to my carriage.

ARTHUR.

Sir, if you have the carriage here, and if you would have the patience to sit out the rest of the rehearsal, we might return with you to Cavendish Square.

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Choking.*] Oh—h—h—h!

ARTHUR.

Grandfather, we are not rich people, and a cab to us——

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Exhausted.*] Arthur——!

TOM.

Sir William will return to his box! [*Going up the stage.*] O'Dwyer!

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Protesting weakly.*] No, sir! no!

[O'DWYER *appears.*

TOM.

Mr. O'Dwyer, escort Sir William Gower to his box.

[ARTHUR *goes up the stage with* SIR WILLIAM, SIR WILLIAM *still uttering protests.* ROSE *and* IMOGEN *embrace.*

O'DWYER.

[*Giving an arm to* SIR WILLIAM.] Lean on me, sir! heavily, sir——!

TOM.

Shall we proceed with the rehearsal, Sir William, or wait till you are seated?

SIR WILLIAM.

[*Violently.*] Wait! Confound ye, d'ye think I want to remain here all day!

[SIR WILLIAM *and* O'DWYER *disappear.*

TOM.

[*Coming forward, with* ARTHUR *on his right—wildly.*] Go on with the rehearsal! Mr. Gordon and Miss Rose Trelawny! Miss Trelawny! [ROSE *goes to him.*] Trelawny—late of the "Wells"! Let us—let—— [*Gripping* ARTHUR'S *hand tightly, he bows his head upon* ROSE'S *shoulder.*] Oh, my dears——! let us—get on with the rehearsal——!

THE END.

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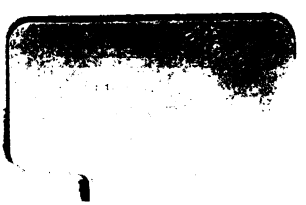

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